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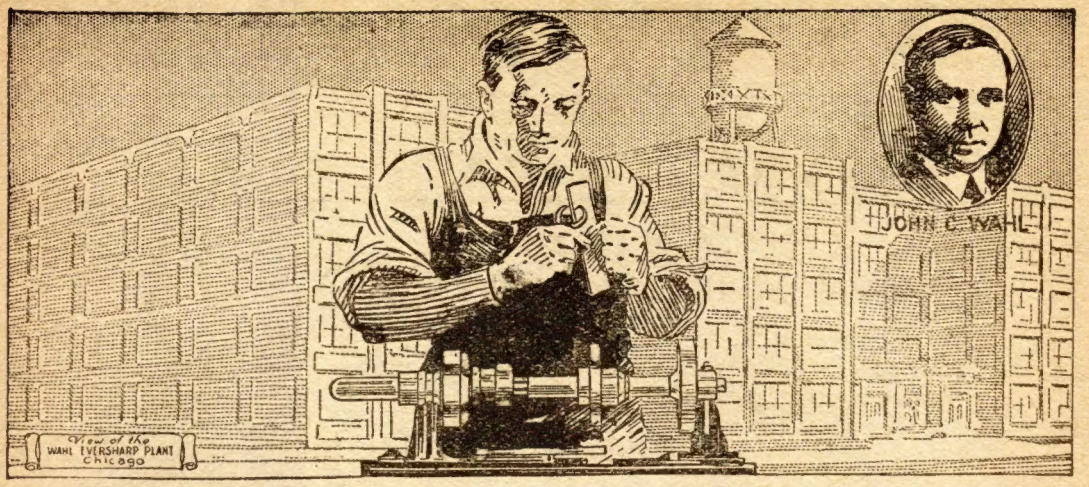

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"MIXED MOTIVES"

by *Eric Howard*

CHAPTER ONE

HARRY LANE sat at his desk in the city room of the *Express* waiting for the telephone to ring. He was hoping with all the fervor of a badly-smitten young man that Susan Jocelyn would tell him she could go to the theatre with him that night.

He had known her just one week, but he was already beseeching her at regular and frequent intervals to dine with him, to go to the latest first-night show, and in other ways to help him make profitable use of his ample spare time.

During the first few minutes they were together when they first met he learned that she was a child of the North, having been born in Alaska and having lived there with her uncle until she was ten. Then, she told him, she had been sent away to school in Seattle, where she had spent eight years, expecting to return to her uncle when her schooling was finished. But meanwhile he had dropped out of sight quite mysteriously and she had been unable to locate him. She had no other relatives; so she had gone to work, first in Seattle, and then in New York. For the first time she was seeing a phase of life quite unfamiliar to her. It was interesting, she found, but unsatisfactory.

Tonight she was to meet him after dinner and they were to go to the theatre. He often covered important first nights as well as the dramatic critic, because when a play needed "panning" he could provide it so amusingly that even the actors and managers laughed.

Unluckily her acceptance of his invitation had been qualified, as it had been before, by the words "If I do not have to work." It seemed that the man whom she served as secretary was an eccentric old banker who sometimes took it into his head to work at night.

In the midst of Barry's dreams the telephone jingled and he seized the receiver.

"Hello, Mr. Lane," said Susan in the low, rich voice he knew so well, "I'm terribly sorry, and I feel wretched about disappointing you——"

"Oh, don't tell me you can't come, please!" protested Barry.

Susan laughed lightly at his solemn tones.

"I think it's a shame that some one doesn't use that ticket," she said. "Promise me that you'll find some one else to go. No, really, I can't come. Mr. Drake has some very important work to do tonight, and I told you how he is. I shouldn't have accepted; I might have known something would come up."

"Oh, I'm glad you accepted," corrected Barry. "At least you give me something to look forward to. But can't you possibly get him to change his mind? Really, no work is as important as what I want to say. I mean—well—oh, please play hooky and come along."

"No, I really can't. I'm sorry."

"Not half as sorry as am. I say, let's see the play tomorrow night—if it's worth seeing at all. I'll only sit through the first act tonight, and we can go tomorrow."

"Oh, please don't spoil your evening! But—yes, I will, if I'm free tomorrow."

She interrupted his heavy word of thanks with a soft good-by and hung up the receiver. He did likewise but he sat and stared at nothing for several minutes. He thought he had detected a peculiar and thrilling intonation in her last words.

Barry was mighty proud of Susan Jocelyn. He knew that her position with the old gentleman must be one requiring tact, intelligence and ability of a kind women are not supposed to possess. Mr. Drake was unmarried, and had never been married, so far as any one knew. It was presumable that he was old-fashioned enough to have little respect for modern girls who went into business.

Barry went to the theatre alone because he could think of no one else he wanted to sit beside him during the performance. The play, it appeared almost as soon as the curtain rose, was one of those recurrent melodramas about the poor working girl who is employed by a wicked and wealthy man. Such plays under new titles reappear year after year, destined for either a huge success or a flat failure. Barry had seen so many other versions of the same tale that he did not have to listen to the lines. The story was what it had been for years past.

But it had a curious effect upon him. As he watched the action upon the stage with unseeing eyes each new danger of the heroine, each new situation in which she became enmeshed, seemed to be one that was threatening Susan Jocelyn. His morbid premonition of the afternoon returned to haunt him with greater than its pristine power.

At ten-thirty he strolled out with several other members of the staff to a nearby restaurant, where they consumed a hearty meal and quarreled over the innumerable questions in the next day's news.

When he left the others Barry felt that it was far too early to go home. He lived in an apartment in Sheridan Square, looking out over the faint suggestion of park that still remains within the iron-fenced triangle. Sometimes when he left the office early he walked home up the dark gloom of West Broadway, through Washington Square, and thence down Waverly Place to his own rooms.

Tonight he had another reason for walking. Following his usual course he would pass the dark bulk of Mr. Drake's home in Washington Square North. It would reassure him to see everything there as it should be, for although Susan had probably left it an hour before, he wanted to make sure that nothing out of the ordinary had happened at the Drake house.

Swinging along the dark street, he continued to think of the girl.

Barry suddenly remembered what some one, probably the financial editor of the *Express,* had told him. Mr. Drake, it seemed, was a man of considerable mystery, or, rather, had been. The last forty years of his life were pages in an open and freely circulated book; but before that, said the financial editor, nobody knew a thing about Drake, and he himself never referred to the earlier half of his life.

Barry was pondering over the man and thinking no less of the girl, when he emerged from West Broadway into Washington Square.

Across the park he saw the dignified and austere outlines of the Drake house. Unlike its neighbors, it had been kept in a good state of repair and had preserved its aristocratic appearance in spite of the ravages of time. It was a red brick building of the American basement type, set back from the pavement within an iron grille and an ornamental gate bearing a brass plate inscribed with Drake's initials. There was a tiny patch of lawn within the enclosure and a few shrubs. The basement windows were protected by bars. The steps

led up to a white doorway and large double doors which were also ornamented with a polished brass plate.

Through the transom above these doors a dim night light was burning. The basement and the first floor, except for the hall light, were dark. The second floor, too, was unlighted. But the windows of the third floor were gleaming, shedding their radiance across the street.

Barry looked at his watch. It was a quarter of twelve. He wondered if Susan Jocelyn was still at work.

He was staring so intently at the lighted third floor windows that he did not see where he was going. But he was brought to a full stop as he collided with a huge man under the street light at the corner. The man turned upon him with a growl.

CHAPTER TWO

RECOGNITION was immediate and mutual.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Lane?" asked the patrolman of the beat. "Have you been covering a raid on a bootlegger, or what?"

"I'm sorry I jolted you, Geraghty," Barry apologized. "No, I was just dreaming. It's a fine night, isn't it?"

"It is, indeed! A fine, quiet night for me, with nothing at all to do but to walk me beat and look at the stars. Sure, the city is becoming a quiet place these days. For a change I'd like a little of the excitement we used to have."

Officer Geraghty was to have his wish for excitement fully gratified before that night was over.

The reporter and the policeman, old friends, walked slowly down the peaceful street. While they reminisced over their mutual adventures Barry kept his eyes upon the third floor windows of the Drake house. He could not forget his uneasiness of the afternoon and evening. It still seemed to him, and no amount of self-argument would dispel the fear, that Susan Joselyn was in danger.

They walked along the edge of the park as far as the Macdougal street corner, Barry still looking back towards the home of Drake, and stopped for a moment at the corner.

Suddenly, cutting into the silence of the night, there came the sound of a shot, or the unmuffled exhaust of a powerful motor, or the blowout of a tire. Just what it was neither of the men could decide. Upon its heels, however, came the sound of an engine and in another second a low-swung, powerful roadster lurched with drunken speed out of Macdougal alley, swerved into the street, and cut into Eighth street on two wheels. They were a short half-block from the car, but at that distance it was impossible to make out its license number or, indeed, to determine its make. Barry thought he had seen two persons in the car; Geraghty insisted there was only one.

"It's probably one of them artists that lives in the alley in one of them done-over stables. But he's breaking the speed laws, sure. But no—it ain't any one that lives there, because none of 'em has a boat like that."

The first sound, the swift flight of the car, and their mild disagreement about it all occurred within a few seconds.

Then again the deceptive silence cloaked the city. It lasted for only an instant, however, for from somewhere down the street —and to Barry it seemed to be from the Drake house—came a woman's terrified shriek, as if she had just discovered a thing of horror. Then once again silence reigned.

The two men started without a word in the direction of the woman's cry.

Barry thought of the location of the Drake house. In the rear there was a little garden, a patch of lawn and a few trees. Then there was a high fence, and directly behind that fence an old stable, formerly a part of the Drake property, now done over and made into an artist's studio, facing on Macdougal alley. The stable, he supposed, had been sold before Drake came into possession of the property; at any rate, it was no longer a part of his ménage.

The car that sped out of the alley carried two passengers, he was sure, in spite of Geraghty's conviction that there was only

one. Two passengers—a man at the wheel and a woman beside him. He had seen her long, trailing motor veil as the car swerved.

They ran across the street when they came opposite the house, and Barry looked up at the third floor windows. As he did so the lights that had gleamed from them suddenly went out. The whole house, even to the light above the transom of the double doors, was plunged in darkness.

Geraghty saw it, too. As he thrust the gate open and dashed up the stairs, his hand gripping the butt of his gun, the doors opened and a man came out. Geraghty's electric torch played upon him like a spotlight.

"Come in!" the fellow cried. "Mr. Drake has been killed!"

Barry saw that the man in the door was only partly dressed. He had drawn a pair of trousers over his suit of pajamas, the coat of which he still wore. His thick gray hair was ruffled, his thin, pale face and narrow mouth gray and set in the light of the torch. Unmistakably a servant, probably a lower class Englishman.

The servant reached up and struck a match, applying it to a gas-jet.

"The electricity is cut off," he explained. "And the telephone, too. I tried to get police headquarters a moment ago. Then I came to the door to call a policeman and saw you running this way."

"Where's the body, and when did you find him?" Geraghty demanded, breathing hard from the run.

"In his study on the third floor. Everything is just as it was. I was awakened by a peculiar noise; at first I thought it was the sound of a motor, then I thought it was a shot. I got up to investigate and heard a shriek. Then I went to Mr. Drake's study, where the shriek seemed to come from, and found him dead. Mr. Drake had dismissed me for the night at ten o'clock."

"Who else is in the house?"

"Only the cook—her room is down in the basement. I haven't been down to see yet, but she's a heavy sleeper and I suppose she didn't wake up. The other servants come in each day."

"Was Mr. Drake alone this evening?" Barry demanded, trembling in the fear that Susan had been with him.

"Except for his secretary, sir," replied the servant. "But she must have gone home long ago. There was no one in the room when I got there, and no one else on the third floor. I looked in the other rooms."

"You say you heard a shriek? Was it a man or a woman?"

"I thought it was a woman, sir; but it might have been Mr. Drake. His voice is high-pitched when he's angry."

"Let's wake up the cook," said Geraghty. "You stay here, Mr. Lane, and see that nobody leaves the house. Lead me to the sound sleeper, you!"

The servant escorted Geraghty down the stairs at the rear of the first floor hall, and in a moment Barry heard their mingled voices below. They had some difficulty, it appeared, in awakening the cook, but in a few minutes they reappeared with a fat and frightened woman in tow, her round, good-natured face ludicrous in its mask of fear.

Taking no chances, the patrolman then made a thorough search of the basement and the first floor. The servant preceded him, lighting the gas in each room until the lower floors were flooded with brilliance. Finding no one, Geraghty locked all of the doors and pocketed the keys. Then he led the way up the stairs and renewed his quest on the second floor. Barry could hardly contain himself at this delay, although he recognized its importance. There was only one thing he wanted to do—that was to find Susan if she was still in the house, and to protect her from whatever hideous thing she had seen. He was certain, despite the servant's opinion, that the shriek of terror had come from a woman's lips, and that the woman was Susan Jocelyn.

Patrolman Geraghty led the way to the third floor, and there again went about his methodical search. In reply to his questions the servant supplied him with information regarding the rooms on that floor. He led the way from one to another, starting with his own bedroom at the rear of the hall, and then entering a larger room directly opposite which was filled with a litter of books, magazines anl letter files. These

two rooms occupied all of the space at the rear of the house, save the hall between, on which both opened. Their windows looked out upon the rear garden and the top branches of the few trees brushed against the panes. From the second room Barry could look down into Macdougal alley. A light was burning in the rear of the building that had once been the stable of this mansion. It was from there, or thereabouts, thought Barry, that the speeding car had plunged into Macdougal street.

"We seldom enter this room," the servant explained as the flare of gas revealed the débris that littered the floor. "Mr. Drake and I had keys, but it is usually locked. He didn't want his things here disturbed."

As he spoke he looked carefully about the room, and his eyes rested upon the window-sill, from which part of the dust of weeks had been swept away as if a hand had passed across. He moved to the window and found it unlatched. Geraghty followed him and looked closely at the clean spots upon the sill. In the light of his torch it was clear that they had been made by human hands, but Geraghty observed that there were no perceptible fingerprints. Whoever had touched the window had worn gloves.

"These windows are seldom, if ever, opened," said the servant. "I am sure this was locked the last time I came here. But that was a week ago. Some one has unlocked it since."

"Yes," agreed Geraghty, "and it looks like he had done it tonight."

There was no rear stairway from the third floor to those below. Only the first and basement floors were so connected; therefore if any one had left the house it would be by the front stairs or by means of one of the rear windows.

There were but two more rooms of the house to be explored, or, rather, one that had once been two. Mr. Drake's study and library was an enormous room occupying the entire front half of the house, excepting that taken up by the wide stairway. There had once been a partition dividing this space in two, but that had been removed and the room now extended from the long windows overlooking Washington Square to the wall of the storeroom in the rear. There were two doors leading into the study, both opening upon the hall and placed some fifteen feet apart.

Geraghty had taken pains to lock the door of the servant's room and of the storeroom. Now as he made ready to enter the study he directed Barry to open one door as he flung open the other. Simultaneously, followed by the valet and the cook, the one calm as the other was hysterical, they entered the high-ceilinged, spacious, beautiful room in which an ugly murder had been committed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE servant, whose name was Grimm, lit the gas in the massive chandeliers and the room filled with shadows cast by the lights. From a modern viewpoint it was too crowded with furniture and odds and ends of ornaments to be in the best taste.

A huge armchair on one side of the table was occupied by the still form of the dead; he had been suddenly stricken, but otherwise there was nothing unusual in his appearance.

Across the table from the dead man there was a smaller chair. Open before it on the table there was a stenographer's notebook, in which appeared the hieroglyphics of the trade. Beside the notebook, startlingly out of place in a room otherwise peaceful and soft in tone, there was an automatic.

Grimm had said that he had touched nothing in the room after his discovery of the crime. There was no evidence of a struggle, at least of a physical struggle, and the room had every appearance of being as it had been before the murder.

But the thing that puzzled and perturbed Barry Lane was the stenographer's notebook that lay upon the table. It looked as if she had left it for only a moment, intending to resume her work. Perhaps she had left the room and had returned a few moments later to find her employer dead.

The policeman knew that his duty was to summon an inspector from Central office as quickly as possible.

He would have to go downstairs and blow his police whistle at the door, summoning another patrolman who could be despatched to the nearest working telephone. Meanwhile he wasn't sure of what he should do with the two servants. They helped him to solve the problem by requesting to be allowed to go to their rooms to dress. The cook was amusing in her self-conscious modesty. Geraghty hesitated a moment, considering the matter. Then he shrugged and gave them permission. After all, all the doors were locked and the keys were in his pocket. Besides, there was no reason to suspect either of them. The cook's heavy slumber was her perfect alibi, and the man was the one who had discovered the body and announced the crime.

In a moment, therefore, Barry was left alone in the room. He heard the steps of the patrolman and the equally heavy cook as they went down the stairs. The cook had sufficiently recovered from sleep and hysteria to be loquacious. She was asking all manner of questions of the patrolman, garnishing them with just enough of the Irish sauce of blarney to win conceited replies from Geraghty, who spoke mysteriously of clues he had observed in the room. Then their voices grew dim, and soon Barry heard the opening of the outer doors and the blasts of Geraghty's whistle, a quick staccato S. O. S.

He was concentrating with utter seriousness upon the problems of finding the girl. He was convinced that it was she whose shriek he had heard, that she had discovered the body and had fled from the room leaving her notebook behind. In his closer inspection he saw that an open briefcase, the one she had carried the last time he saw her, rested beside the chair she had occupied while taking Robert Drake's last dictation. Under the table, directly in front of the chair, he found her handkerchief. He hesitated an instant and then pocketed it.

Where the original partition had been removed to double the size of the room there were two mahogany columns. As he looked towards them Barry thought he detected a slight movement of the curtains, as if a gust of wind had swayed them. But with the windows and doors all closed that was impossible. Puzzled, he paused to consider.

Downstairs he could hear the repeated blasts of Geraghty's whistle, which as yet had now no response from any other member of the force. There was no other sound in the deserted house. The third floor was like a tomb. With the doors closed Barry could not even hear the servant Grimm in his room down the hall.

The portieres swayed again unmistakably, and then Barry saw below them the toe of a tiny shoe. He moved towards the curtains, his hand fell upon them, and he was about to jerk them away, his heart beating rapidly in fear of what he might find there, when his movements were abruptly halted by a soft step behind him. Involuntarily glancing back, he saw a masked man gliding towards him across the floor, in his right hand, which was gloved, an efficient-looking revolver.

"Put up your hands!" said the man.

CHAPTER FOUR

BARRY complied, at the same time surveying the man who had so silently entered the room. He was large, heavy-set, with long arms and huge shoulders, which drooped as if with age or great weariness. He held his revolver at his hip. Barry could see the knuckles of his clenched fist within the kid glove he wore. His movements were catlike and graceful, despite his cumbersome frame. Now he stood very close to the younger man, his eyes gleaming through the holes of the mask which concealed the rest of his face.

Barry observed that he wore a heavy overcoat of the ulster type, although the night was mild. A soft felt hat with a broad brim cast a dark shadow across his brow. Iron-gray hair covered his temples.

"Come out, Sue," he commanded in the

same low tone he had used in ordering Barry to put up his hands.

The girl—and it was Susan Jocelyn—came from behind the portieres, trembling, wide-eyed, afraid. At a gesture from the man she crept to his side. She crouched timidly against him, and her eyes met Barry's with a mingling of appeal, fright, defiance and despair. He could not know what she meant to express, but involuntarily he tensed his muscles and lowered his uplifted hands an inch. For a glance of appeal from Susan Jocelyn he would have grappled with the man and risked everything in a chance to overpower him. But at his first movement the revolver was thrust at him and the man said:

"Don't move! Miss Jocelyn's safety is at stake. This is for her!"

The girl's eyes had gone to the dead man in the chair, and she recoiled with a shudder.

"Is that true, Susan? Is this man your friend?" demanded Barry.

"Ye—yes. Help us, please, Barry! I can't explain, but help us."

Her eyes met his again with that strange and incomprehensible expression. But her words were clear; she had asked his aid. He could do nothing but grant it. He bowed.

"Quick, then!" said the man. "Don't say a word when the others return. You haven't seen us at all, understand? Stand where you are! Don't move. You may lower your arms, but don't leave the room."

Again Barry bowed and won a faint, troubled smile from the girl. Then the masked man backed towards the door, his arm about Susan, supporting her. In an instant he had opened the door and passed through. Then it closed noiselessly and Barry stood alone in the room, dazed, as if he had been dreaming. He passed a hand over his brow and found it damp with perspiration. Very slowly he relaxed and walked to the door.

From below he could hear Geraghty talking to some one, probably another officer. After a short colloquy he heard the patrolman call to the cook, heard her answer, and soon the two were again ascending the stairs.

Barry opened the door through which the masked intruder and the girl had disappeared and looked into the hall. From the head of the stairway to the other end it was empty. Pausing a moment in hesitation, Barry then walked to the door of the storeroom. There he stopped for an instant, then tried the door. It was locked. From the room opposite, the bedroom of Grimm, the servant, he could hear his movements as he dressed. He knocked on the door.

"Come in," said Grimm, and Barry entered. The man had just finished knotting his bow tie and was now pulling on his conventional black coat.

"Did you hear a noise a moment ago?" asked Barry.

"Not a thing, sir, except the police whistle."

Barry eyed the man for a moment, uppermost in his mind a suspicion that Grimm might have been the masked intruder. But there was an amazing disparity between the slender man-servant and the bulky stranger, and no kind of disguise could have given Grimm the long arms of the other, even if a skilfully made coat might have widened his shoulders and increased his girth.

Together the two left the small room and went into the hall. Geraghty and the cook could be heard near the head of the stairs. Barry looked down over the railing at the top. From where he stood he could see to the first floor. The stairs were brightly lighted the whole way. It would have been impossible for any one to have risked descending them with the lights burning and Geraghty at the bottom keeping watch.

The man and the girl must have left the house from the third floor. But how?

"Well, I've sent a man to telephone Headquarters," said Geraghty, breaking into the reporter's perplexed self-questioning, "and there's another downstairs in front of the house keeping watch. So there's nothing we can do except to stay here and wait for the inspectors to come. I s'pose you'll be writin' your story as soon as you can, eh,

Mr. Lane? It'll be a scoop for you, sure."

"What? Sorry? Oh, yes, I suppose so," Barry replied absently. In the excitement of the last few minutes he had entirely forgotten his trade.

No questions were asked by the patrolman and therefore Barry was saved the necessity of telling a lie regarding the happenings in the room.

As Geraghty had said, there was nothing at all to do until the inspectors had come from Central office. The patrolman, the cook and the valet were still in the room talking their commonplaces, rather awed by the fact that they were close to death and mystery. The cook expatiated at considerable length, and amusingly enough, upon the dead man's peculiar gastronomic fancies. That she had respected and loved her master was evident in all she said. Grimm, too, in his dry, unemotional way, revealed his employer's cheerful character and considerate good humor.

"He was a fine man," Barry heard him say. "And not a bit proud or snobbish for all his money. As good as gold he was, and I've seen him every day of his life for ten years now, and I've never known him to be unjust to any one. He had his tempers, to be sure, but only for very good reasons, and he was quick to get over them. He wasn't like most men of his years. No, indeed! Sometimes I felt older myself, and I'm only fifty. He was seventy-eight his last birthday."

"Did you know him to have any enemies?" asked Geraghty, detective-like.

"Not one, sir. Never! And I don't see how he could have had, with his nature."

Unable to restrain himself while thinking of the events of the night, Barry sat down and began to write his story of the crime. Concentrating upon it, taking care to describe just what had happened, omiting only what he alone had seen, he heard no more of the others' conversation. He finished his direct narrative of what Geraghty and he had discovered, elaborated upon the mystery that shrouded the crime, and chewed up his pencil, mentally retracing the actions of Susan Jocelyn.

Soon afterwards three plainclothes men arrived. One of them was an officer Barry had met before, Inspector Reilly. The second was a thin, beak-nosed man with shifty eyes, not at all of the usual police type, who was introduced as Hugo Vollmer. The name was well known to Barry, for it had often appeared in the papers. Vollmer, despite his appearance, was the best detective in Central office. He had solved countless mysteries and had prevented many more crimes. He was quiet, retiring, but eternally watchful. The third man was a youngster of twenty-four or -five, who seemed to have no importance except as Vollmer's all-around assistant.

Nominally Inspector Reilly was in charge of the investigation. It was he who questioned Geraghty, Barry and the servants, making notes of their replies. It was he whose voice directed the quest for evidence within the room. But Barry could see that Vollmer paid little attention to this formal part of the police activity. He and his assistant, whose name was James, went about their work as though they were alone in the room. At a low word from Vollmer the assistant picked up the automatic from the table, not touching it with his hands, but folding it carefully in a clean handkerchief. Vollmer then chalked the position of the gun upon the table top. James also took the stenographic notebook, the open page of which Vollmer marked, folded it in another handkerchief and picked up the brief case from the floor.

Vollmer next bent over the chair that had been used by Susan Jocelyn and marked its position upon the floor with a piece of chalk. Then he sat down in the chair, avoiding any contact of his hands upon it or upon the table, and drew out his pistol, leveling it at the body of Drake on the other side of the table as the murderer must have done if he had been sitting in the chair. His assistant, who stood next to the corpse, shook his head.

"No," said Vollmer, "he must have been standing up."

He stood up and again leveled the gun. Evidently more nearly satisfied, he replaced it in his pocket and made a note.

"All right, James, let's go," he said.

His nose for news again at work, Barry made an excuse to leave with the two detectives. Inspector Reilly and Patrolman Geraghty were left in charge.

But if the journalist expected to get an unusual addition to his story from Vollmer he was disappointed. Although he rode to Central Office with the detectives, he found Vollmer taciturn and deep in thought. He would venture no opinion. He said he had no clue, as yet, to work upon.

Barry went on the *Express*, barely in time to catch the morning edition with his "beat" of the crime. In the story naturally he avoided any mention of Susan Jocelyn other than to refer to the notebook and brief-case, but he was sufficiently flattering towards the police officers to be assured of a welcome from them when anything new developed.

Later when he taxied homeward he knew that a sleepless night was before him.

Leaning over on an impulse he told the driver to take him to the entrance of the alley. He could not sleep; he could at least start his investigation now as well as at any other time.

Not long after he paid his fare and watched the taxicab turn back to its stand. When it was gone and the street was quite deserted he turned into the paved walk of the alley and proceeded past the former stables that now housed artists and sculptors to the building which stood directly behind the Drake house.

It was a story-and-a-half in height, built of brick, with a huge oak door held in place by massive iron hinges and windows which were heavily curtained. But he saw that a faint ray of light crept from behind the curtains and he remembered the light he had seen from the Drake house. The building was occupied and some one was evidently awake and alert.

Barry lifted the heavy iron knocker and let it fall. For a moment there was no sound. Then he was sure that he heard quick steps across the floor of the room within, the rustle of silken garments and hurried whispers. Then again silence. He lifted the knocker and let it fall for the second time. Almost immediately the door was opened by a tall, bearded man who wore a long dressing-gown. Briefly Barry explained himself. The man evidently knew his name, for he courteously asked him to step inside.

Barry quickly told him of the Drake murder and asked if he had heard a shot at about twelve o'clock, or if he had seen anything of a powerful roadster that had left the alley at about that time.

"Why, I believe I did, now that you recall it to my mind," answered the man in a slightly foreign accent. "I did hear what might have been a shot and it seemed to come from the direction of Washington Square. But immediately afterwards I heard the exhaust of a motor, which seemed to be just outside. Perhaps I connected them in my mind, for I thought no more about it. I have been home all evening."

"Alone?" asked Barry.

"Not quite alone," replied the man, with a dreamy, faraway expression, as if he saw something behind Barry that was fascinating. Impulsively Barry looked backwards, following the other's glance, and caught a glimpse of a bare white arm, unmistakably feminine, upraised in anger. The hand grasped something he could not identify.

That was the last thing he saw for some time, for the unidentifiable object came down upon his head with a force that sent him reeling. He fell from the chair to the floor and lay there unconscious.

CHAPTER FIVE

BARRY emerged from the coma with a throbbing headache and a feverish desire to know what had happened to him. He was in his own bedroom in his apartment in Sheridan Square, and for several minutes he lay back staring at the familiar strangeness of the room. Then, in a swift tide of recollection, the happenings of the night before—he supposed it was the night before—rushed upon him.

He discovered that he was fully clothed.

Some one, perhaps the beaded and courteous accomplice of his white-armed assailant, had brought him home and tossed him on the bed. He pulled out his watch and discovered that it was eleven o'clock.

Dizzily he got to his feet and staggered across the room to the window. Drawing the curtains, he looked out upon the sunlit street. Eleven o'clock in the morning! He hoped he had not slept through a whole day.

He washed and brushed his hair in perfunctory haste and then descended the three flights to the street.

At the corner grocery he picked up copies of the morning papers, relieved to see his own story upon the front page of the *Express*. It was a beat, but he took no pride in his achievement, for he was a great deal more concerned with the unpublished and unrecorded happenings.

He breakfasted upon three cups of strong coffee at a nearby restaurant and then returned to his apartment to read the papers and to search for any possible clue as to the identity of his assailants that might have been left there.

Despite his almost intolerable headache, which the coffee had seemingly aggravated, he made a systematic search of his rooms, beginning at the front door, which had probably been opened with his own key, and proceeding slowly over the space his guardians must have covered in escorting him to his bedroom. He found nothing, however, except an overturned chair in the tiny hall, which had escaped his notice earlier.

As he stood before the window of his bedroom, his unsuccessful search completed, he thrust his hands dejectedly into his pockets. He was at a loss to know what should be his next move.

Unconsciously one of his hands closed over a piece of paper in his pocket and mechanically he drew it out. It seemed to be a part of a cheap paper bag, which had been hurriedly torn off. He smoothed it out and turned it over. On the back, scrawled in thick, rapid strokes with a soft pencil, appeared these words:

"You know too much. Forget it. Keep your hand out of the Drake affair or you will follow him."

It was unsigned. Barry did not know the heavily shaded writing, but the upward strokes conveyed a suggestion of the same imperious will as the emphatic words of the warning. As he looked more closely at the writing, endeavoring to decide whether it was that of a man or a woman, he saw that the final strokes of each word were greasy smudges of graphite. Rubbing one of them, he found that it left a black mark on his finger. The pencil with which the note had been written was no ordinary pencil, of that he was sure. It must be one made for drawing. In that case the note had probably been written in the Macdougal alley studio immediately after the assault upon him, for such a pencil might reasonably be there even if it were not the sort a man would carry in his pocket.

As he again descended to the street he thought that it would be wise, even at the risk of another blow on the head, to call upon the occupant of the Macdougal alley studio.

Passing the corner stand, he bought a new supply of papers—the noon editions were now out—and tucked them under his arm. Then he walked on in the direction of Washington Square. At Macdougal street he hesitated for a moment, deciding whether he should call first at the studio or at the Drake house. He thought it would be best to go first to the studio, for he could then report anything unusual there to the police who would be guarding the house of death.

It occurred to him that he ought to call at Susan Jocelyn's home, which was near by. Although he had no idea that she would be there, he thought he should inform himself of her supposed whereabouts. Considering it, he walked a block out of his way to pass the house where she lived, but he decided that it would be unwise to call there when he saw Inspector Reilly coming down the steps.

A thrill of fear passed over him at the sight of the officer, for his presence could only mean that he was trying to locate the girl. He wondered, and yet he felt that he

dare not satisfy his curiosity, why the police were searching for her and whether they knew her whereabouts. He was so preoccupied with his plans that he had not even opened the papers under his arm. The answers to several of his questions were printed there, but he was not to know it for some little time.

More troubled than before, he went on to Macdougal alley and walked as he had done the night before to the studio in the rear of the Drake premises. It was just as he had seen it, except that now the wide oak doors were open and a woman, evidently a Scandinavian peasant, was energetically sweeping rugs on the pavement before the door. She did not look up at his approach, but went on with her work. A man came out of the studio with more rugs for her to sweep and tossed them down. Barry looked at him in amazement and recognized a painter he had interviewed several weeks before, a man he had known casually for three or four years.

"Hello, Lane!" said the painter, looking up. "Welcome to our alley! Come in, won't you? I'm just moving in today and fearfully unsettled, but I think I can rummage a drink|"

"Thanks, Davidson! Don't mind if I do. I'm trying to get rid of a headache."

Davidson, the artist, did not wear a beard and did not in any other way resemble the man who had come to the door of the studio the night before. Lane followed him across the threshold.

Except for the disturbance caused by the vigorous efforts of the maid the studio was exactly as it had been the night before. Barry saw the chair in which he had sat while talking with the bearded man, and visualized the scene of the assault upon him. He knew just where the woman with white arms had stood and he saw the arrangement of the rooms that he had not observed before. From the entrance hall a short stairway led to what had formerly been the loft of the stable, which was now converted into a balcony, with a railing over which decorative rugs were hung. The entrance to the main room of the studio from the hall was curtained. On the other side of the hall were two other rooms, a small bedroom and a diminutive kitchen. The woman who had struck him must have hidden in the bedroom when he had knocked at the door, coming out again to strike him at a signal from her companion.

"This is good stuff!" he complimented Davidson, and asked casually: "Taking the place furnished?"

"Yes, it's pretty well done," nodded Davidson. "As soon as I get it in shape I'll give a house-warming. I want you to come. That interview was great; and not only because it sold two pictures."

"I'm glad it did that. Who had this place before? It looks familiar."

"A Russian sculptor named Cherniavski. He made a big splurge and then went broke, I guess. He moved out a week ago and that gave me the chance to take over his unexpired lease at a decent rental."

Barry remembered having seen pictures of the Russian and his wife. He wondered if they could have been the persons who had entertained him in what he considered a characteristic Russian way the night before. The sculptor did wear a beard and his wife was a distinguished beauty whose arms might be as white as the one that had struck him down. As soon as he could get to the *Express* morgue he meant to study Cherniavski's picture carefully. Davidson, he knew, was above suspicion. Barry took his word unquestioningly. Nevertheless he hoped to learn more of the studio's previous tenants, if it could be done without revealing his own adventure.

"You're lucky to be coming in only today," he said. "If you had moved earlier you might have been disturbed by the exciting events that have been occurring in the neighborhood."

"What?" asked Davidson.

"Haven't you seen the morning papers?" Barry offered the other those he carried under his arm. "Robert Drake, the banker, who lived directly back of here, was killed last night."

"The devil you say! By Jove, that's too bad! He was a fine old man, and he knew pictures, too, unlike most of the rich men who buy them. I've had some jolly talks with him."

Davidson scanned the headlines and read on down the two-column spread of the *Express's* report. Barry's story still held the place of honor, but by this time an interview with the police, as well as many statements by prominent men who had been associated with Drake, had been added. The first three pages of this edition of the papers were filled with news of the murder.

While the artist was reading the reports Barry looked around the room. On a table in one corner he found a paper bag in which fruit had been carried and from which a piece had been torn. It was the same size and shape as that on which the anonymous threat had been written.

His eyes followed a line from the paper bag to the chair he had occupied the night before. Near the chair he saw a thick, yellow drawing pencil, which had rolled a little way across the rug. He stooped and picked it up with a clean handkerchief, imitating the manner of Vollmer.

Davidson by this time had skimmed the account. He looked from the papers and said: "By Jove, it is too bad! Robert Drake was the last man in the world to be killed in this ugly fashion. But it certainly looks bad for the girl, whoever she is! I hope they get her!"

"Girl? What girl?" Barry demanded, seizing the papers from the other's hands.

The one that was uppermost, a sensational journal, carried on the first page a photograph of Susan Jocelyn. Below it was an offer of a reward for information concerning her whereabouts. Then followed the interview with the authorities and the announcement that the girl secretary was being sought as the murderess because it had been established that the fingerprints upon the gun which had killed Drake were the same as those upon her notebook and brief-case!

"My God!" groaned Barry. "My God!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE shock of discovering that the girl he loved and about whom he knew so little was sensationally accused of the murder of Robert Drake was too much for Barry Lane. He sank into a chair and gulped the second highball Davidson had prepared.

But even in this first moment Barry did not believe that it was possible for a girl like Susan Jocelyn to have committed such a crime. Although he had known her only a week and knew nothing about her except what she had told him he had no doubt at all about her character and spirit.

"What's the matter, Lane?" demanded Davidson. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

Barry essayed a smile, but it was a wan failure. "I know the girl," he explained, "and it is a shock. The police are wrong, of course—she couldn't have had anything to do with it."

"Oh, say, if you know her I'm sorry. Well, I certainly hope not. But from what this sleuth Vollmer says it must be a pretty bad case of circumstances against her. She was alone with Drake, the butler says, and there's no disputing fingerprint evidence."

"No," Barry agreed; "but she didn't do it. She couldn't have done it." Then he added, rather inanely: "You see, I know her."

He got up and stumbled out of the room with a word of thanks to Davidson. He felt that he must do something about the charge against Susan at once. What he could do he did not know, but he had to do something.

As he walked away, neither knowing nor caring what direction his step took, he admitted to himself that from the police viewpoint the circumstances of the case did look bad for Susan Jocelyn.

Barry decided that the best thing for him to do was to verify his suspicion of the Russian Cherniavski. Also he had to report to the *Express,* and he meant to ask the managing editor to let him have entire freedom in following up his inside information about the case. It would be a fine feather in the *Express's* journalistic cap if he succeeded in unraveling the mystery.

The managing editor told him to go as far as he liked.

"Take all the time you need," he said.

"This isn't exactly your line, but it's mighty important. Drake was one of the biggest men in the city—in the entire country, for the matter of that—and anything we can do to apprehend the murderer we shall do. I've already assigned our regular crime-hounds to the case, but luck put you next to the murder itself and you may be able to learn more about it. Only don't lose your sense of humor on the job."

Confidentially Barry told the managing editor about the assault upon him. He let the other think that it might have nothing to do with the Drake case, but that it was worth following up.

"I've got a hunch," he smiled.

In the "morgue," that pictorial repository of forgotten sensations, he found the photographs of Cherniavski and his wife. He took the envelopes in which they were filed and went to another room to search through the back issues of the *Express* for further information about the Russians. When he had secured the volumes he wanted he returned to his desk and began his study of the sculptor.

The first photographs in the envelope were "art studies" in soft focus, of little value as a means of identification. But below them in another picture the bearded face and large form of the man he had met in the Macdougal alley studio looked out at him. The face was unmistakably the same—the same square and heavy beard, the same aquiline nose, the same lively eyes. Cherniavski had been the accomplice of his assailant, had perhaps directed the assault.

He turned to the other pictures, those of Madame Cherniavski in a variety of poses. Of course he had not seen the woman who had used the weapon upon him, but he could easily imagine from one study of the lady in *décolletté* that it had been her white arm he had seen as it struck.

"A precious couple!" he muttered to himself, and went on to the reports of their advent in New York.

They had won considerable publicity for a short time and numerous receptions had been given in their honor. They were, they said, refugees from the terrors of Bolshevism, and the man modestly stated that he had given up his title and hoped to become an American citizen. His artistic achievements seemed to be known only in Europe, and chiefly in his own country. He had only a few pieces of his work to exhibit, which the critics had called true art. He had settled in the Macdougal alley studio to pursue his career, and had there given one reception.

For a week the Russians had been prominent in the public press. Then their names appeared occasionally for a time, but soon they dropped out of the public eye as quickly as they had come. This was perhaps accounted for by their failing fortunes, as Davidson had suggested, if it might not also be explained by their complicity in the Drake murder.

"Well," said Barry to himself, "I can locate these two Russians at least. And if I'm careful not to let them lead me into another ambush maybe I can get the goods on them. One of them undoubtedly wrote that note and therefore they must know a great deal more about the whole affair than a sculptor and his wife have any right to know about murder. By Jove, though, I'd like to have an expert look at the note and pencil I found there. That might uncover a criminal record. But how the deuce can I do that without letting the whole police force know all that I know?"

CHAPTER SEVEN

TO locate the Russians, now as eager to avoid publicity as they had been to win it, Barry found difficult. He began systematically, and as innocently as possible, by telephoning all of his acquaintances in the Russian colony—musicians, artists and dancers. To all of them his story was the same. The managing editor, he said, had asked him to interview Cherniavski, but he had moved and left no address. Where could he be found?

That no one knew; or so they all said. The last man he telephoned, a prominent singer, answered the question with a violent exclamation:

"Cherniavski! That swine! I do not know him. I do not care to know him! He is a great liar and a swindler!"

"As bad as all that, *maestro?*" asked Barry. "Well, well, well! I don't want to interview a man like that. May I come up to see you now? I've intended to write a story about you for a long time."

Instantly the singer's tone changed. He would be most pleased, flattered, indeed, to have Mr. Lane call.

Barry had no particular intention of writing the interview with the basso, but he did hope to learn why the latter had become violent at the mention of Cherniavski's name.

He found, after having to listen to the singer's fluent autobiography, that Cherniavski had borrowed two hundred dollars from him on the flimsy and ancient pretext of having sold a statue to a rich collector, which would be paid for soon, at which time he would reimburse the singer. The latter explained that always he, as a Russian and an artist, was willing to help a fellow countryman and a fellow artist in distress. But Cherniavski, it seemed, had not sold the statue. After irrevocably losing his two hundred dollars, he had discovered that other members of the colony had been similarly fleeced. Usually, however, Madame Cherniavski borrowed from the men, while her gracious husband allowed the women to help him.

Beyond this Barry could learn nothing. Still it supported his theory that they were deeply involved in the Drake murder. He left the basso's apartment with the feeling that if he could find the Russians, through them he could clear Susan.

The fear that Susan might be held a prisoner by the Cherniavskis was suddenly and surprisingly dispelled as he turned the corner by the newspaper headlines that caught his eye:

"Accused woman caught!"

He snatched one of the papers, tossed a coin to the boy, and glanced quickly at the picture that illustrated the first page. It was a blurred, merciless photograph, but it pictured the face of Susan Jocelyn.

Barry ran madly across the street and caught an empty cab.

"The Tombs!" he cried. "Hurry!"

"Most guys hurry *away* from there," grinned the driver, nevertheless making a neat getaway.

Barry scanned the report. Vollmer, as efficient as usual, had arrested Susan at the Grand Central station as she was about to board a Chicago train. She had purchased a ticket for Seattle. It was this that had led to her arrest, for Vollmer had already learned from Robert Drake's office as much of Susan's past as Barry knew. As a precaution he had had his men watch all ticket offices. Persons buying tickets to the West were carefully observed.

Vollmer, relying largely upon the evidence of the fingerprints, believed her guilty of the murder. So far, he said, she had refused to talk, beyond saying that the tragedy of Mr. Drake's death had so upset her that she had wanted to get away from it all. That statement, in view of the evidence against her, seemed weak and implausible. The police were seeking others who might be implicated and were examining Mr. Drake's affairs in quest of a motive.

More than ever Barry was at a loss to know what to do. Anything he might say to Vollmer would be used against Susan. He knew Vollmer's reputation. The man was cold, dispassionate, centered on catching criminals. His method was impersonal and scientific; fingerprints were his stock-in-trade. He cared nothing, Barry thought bitterly, that Susan was a young, lovely, innocent girl, the girl he loved; Vollmer thought only of her fingerprints on the gun.

"They're wrong!" Barry exclaimed. "They're wrong! If I can only prove it!"

Almost before he knew it the taxi had deposited him before the Tombs. He was readily admitted and allowed to interview Susan.

As soon as he saw her he extended his hand in a gesture that must have told her of his love. Her eyes were tear-stained, her face drawn and tired; but to Barry she was supremely beautiful. It was incredible, impossible, to believe that she——"

"Why did you come?" she sobbed. "You must keep out of this."

"I can't, Susan. You need me. You are all alone. You must tell me all that happened, so that I can help you."

"No, no! I can't—tell—you anything. Don't ask me to! I don't understand. You mustn't try to help me. Promise me you won't. It would only mean trouble and danger for you."

"Susan, dear, I must help you. I know you're innocent. I want to prove it. Can't you help me to do that? I'd do anything in the world for you."

"Oh, Barry, I can't let you. Please! They'll kill you!"

"Who will kill me?" asked Barry gently.

"The ones that killed Mr. Drake," she said.

"Do you know them? Who are they?"

"No! I don't know them. But they're beasts. They would have killed me, I know, if—— Please, please, keep out of this. I shall be all right."

She smiled bravely, but Barry saw that her lips trembled, and he knew that the strain of the past hours had been too great for her. He longed to comfort her, to hold her safely in his arms, to defy the world to prove her guilty.

He took her hand in his and looked into her eyes.

"Susan," he said earnestly, "I love you with all my heart. Whatever happens, remember that I love you. And I'm going to prove that the police are wrong. As soon as I leave I'll send a lawyer, a friend of mine. You needn't talk to him unless you want to, but he will take charge of your hearing. Before I go, tell me anything you can tell me that might help me to clear you of this mistake."

She caught up his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Barry, I am afraid. I don't understand it—so much has happened. I don't want you to be brought into my——"

"I will be. I'm bringing myself into it. Please tell me all you know."

She sighed, and one of her slim white hands passed wearily over her brow.

"I can't tell you anything but this: I promised I wouldn't. Don't ask me anything else. But this I can tell you: After they shot Mr. Drake they said they would meet somebody—I didn't catch the name—at 19 Essex street. I'm sure of the place—I don't know why. I wanted to tell the police, but—— Oh, everything happened so quickly."

"Nineteen Essex street? H'm! Lower East Side. Well, that's a lead, at least, Susan, and I'll follow it. That's all you can tell me?"

"Yes," she replied, hesitantly. "I'd like to tell you—— The man who took me away—I promised I wouldn't say anything. I trust him. He's after them, too. He's—— But I can't tell you that, Barry; I can't."

"Don't, then, dear. I'll be going now. Remember that I love you."

He pressed her hand.

"Oh, Barry, be careful!" she cried. "They're mad and dangerous. Please be careful!" And she added softly: "Thank you for your faith—and love."

CHAPTER EIGHT

BARRY dismissed his taxi in Canal street, around the corner from Essex, and advanced towards No. 19. One side of the street was lined with buildings—a meat market, a baker's, a Russian bathhouse, a cobbler's, and the entrance to dingy tenements, from which emerged and overflowed a surplus of occupants. On the other side of the street was a playground where the children of the tenements were shouting and screaming.

No. 19 stood between a cobbler's and a grocery. It turned out to be a combination of junk-shop and curio store. Odds and ends of old hardware lined the pavement, already thronged with people. In the windows, thick with dust, were a few old brasses that might be genuine. There was no name displayed on door or windows, but a small sign, badly painted, read: "Goods bought and sold."

"Good slogan for a fence!" thought Barry, as he advanced upon the door.

It opened to the accompaniment of a jangling bell. As he stepped inside and

shut the door Barry saw a girl with black bobbed hair push aside a curtain that served as a door to a rear room. The shop itself was crowded and dusty; there was no evidence of anything having been disturbed for weeks. Barry wondered whether even the proprietor knew what was concealed beneath the successive strata of acquisitions.

The girl, who had not looked up from the book she was reading, now surveyed Barry insolently, as if she resented the interruption.

"Yes?" she said. "What is it?"

"Why, I wanted to price those brass candlestricks you have in the window."

"Five dollars a pair," answered the girl, turning the page of her book and reading furiously.

"May I see them?" asked Barry.

The look she gave him as she put down her book made Barry feel humbly apologetic.

As she reached into the window for the candlesticks he glanced quickly about the shop. So far as he could see, from a cursory investigation, it was what any East Side shop dealing in such wares might be. The indifferent girl, who was evidently bored by the necessity of displaying merchandise, was not unlike countless other young foreigners he had encountered in the city. Like them, she seemed feverishly interested in books—listless to all else.

She placed the candlesticks on the counter before him. One he picked up and rubbed with a cloth. He surveyed it critically.

"H'm! I might have known it wasn't genuine from the price. This is no better than tin. Is it the best you have?"

He knew his East Side merchant. The suggestion that he would willingly pay more was enough to inspire any ordinary shopkeeper. But not this girl.

"We have some really good ones," she said, "but they're worth a lot of money." And she turned again to her book.

"Will you let me see them?" Barry asked.

She put her book down with a kind of grim finality and glanced towards the rear room. She nodded.

"Sure. They're back here. Come on!"

Barry followed her. He had hoped to survey that rear room. Now his chance had come. He might yet learn just what this shop was, and what connection it had with Susan Jocelyn and the Drake murder.

The bobbed-haired girl held aside the dirty curtain and bade him enter. He felt nothing but curiosity and a little amusement. The girl seen under other circumstances would have given him material for a metropolitan sketch.

The rear room was perpetually dark, lighted by only one small window, as dusty as those in the shop, which faced upon an unsunned alley. It took Barry a moment to accustom his eyes to the darkness.

When he had accomplished that orientation the first thing that caught his eye was a pistol leveled directly at him. Mechanically he raised his hands over his head, at the same time raising his eyes until he looked into the face of the bearded man who had so hospitably welcomed him to the Macdougal alley studio.

His first instinct was to laugh. It struck him as amusing that he should have so easily found the Russian and that the latter should be characteristically ambushed. An instant later he cursed himself for falling into the trap.

But the laugh won.

"Delighted, Cherniavski!" he grinned audaciously. "I had no idea of finding you here when I wandered in to look at this young lady's collection of brass. Brass—that's just the word. And I've been looking for you all day. The managing editor (but I forgot that you don't know me—I'm Barry Lane of the *Express*)—the managing editor wants an interview with you on art, and he sent me to get it. If you'll put away your Big Bertha—I'm up on all those Russian jokes, like the one you played in Macdougal alley—and let me lower my hands, I'll make a few notes."

"If you move," announced Cherniavski morbidly, "I shall kill you."

"You and the Brothers Karamazov would make a great trio," laughed Barry. "But let's dispense with the Chauve Couris and

get down to brass, since this is a brass shop."

"You've got a lot of it yourself," commented the girl of the black bobbed hair, who had entered the room and seated herself near the window.

"Olga, tie Mr. Lane's hands securely behind him," directed the bearded sculptor.

There was nothing for Barry to do but submit under the circumstances. Again he cursed his folly in allowing the Russian to trap him. He thought of Susan imprisoned and wondered if he would ever see her again.

CHAPTER NINE

HIS hands bound, Barry was offered a chair. He sat down and faced Cherniavski, whose lively dark eyes glared at him.

"Your creditors are organizing a soviet," Barry informed him. "When they get you you'll be as dead as the Czar."

The sculptor snorted.

"Olga," he directed the girl, who had again taken up her book, "ask Katherine to come here. Tell her she didn't hit him hard enough."

The girl nodded and left the room through a door that in the darkness Barry had not observed. He heard her as she went up a stairway. Evidently the second floor apartment was occupied by the keepers of the brass shop. As he thought that Madame Cherniavski, the woman who had struck him, was about to come to her husband's assistance, a tremor of fear shot up his spine. He looked upon Cherniavski himself as a joke; there was so much of the *poseur* in the man's get-up that Barry could not take him seriously. His wife, though, he had every reason to believe was a dangerous and evil woman.

She swept into the room presently and stared at Barry.

"So!" she cried "One may always trust a fool to follow. Why did you come here?"

"I was interested in the brasses," Barry smiled amicably. "But of course I am delighted to meet you, Madame. Your photographs don't do you justice."

The woman was too angry to be moved by flattery. Her eyes, a curious greenish blue, gleamed vindictively; there was a touch of madness in them. Her face was beautiful in contour; in expression it was cold and merciless. Idly Barry wondered why a woman's face revealed malice so much more clearly than a man's.

She wore a dark gown, smartly tailored, that revealed the voluptuous lines of her figure. Barry judged her to be nearly forty; had he been less prejudiced against her he might have accepted her as about twenty-eight.

The bobbed-haired girl did not re-enter the room. Perhaps the Cherniavskis desired no witnesses of what they intended.

Madame Cherniavski bent over her husband and whispered to him. He shook his head negatively.

"Don't be an idiot!" she exclaimed. "We must!"

"It is not necessary," objected the man. "This girl will be convicted. Vollmer has proved her guilty."

His wife laughed unpleasantly.

"You never know!" She turned abruptly to Barry. "What interest have you in the Drake murder?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm just helping Vollmer find the murderer," Barry drawled.

"But he's found her!"

"Oh, no," Barry corrected her. "He knows that girl didn't do it. He's just holding her as a blind, so the real criminal will be thrown off his—I mean her—guard."

"You see!" cried Madame Cherniavski to her husband. "There is nothing else to do. Where's Ivan?"

"He went out. He should be back now," replied her husband. "He may be upstairs."

"Good!"

In a flash the woman had left the room. Barry heard her running up the steps that led to the second floor. She was to get Ivan, whoever he was, and then——

He had bluffed them blindly; but he had discovered at least that Susan had nothing to do with them. She was not one of them;

she was innocent. He exulted at the proof of it, but he knew, too, that he had placed himself in more immediate danger. Alone with Cherniavski he thought he had a better chance than he would have when Ivan and the woman came. The pistol was still in the Russian's hand; his hands were tied behind him. But there was a chance.

Upstairs he could hear movements and words. From the sound he judged that Ivan had not returned. That would mean a delay. Cherniavski, too, was listening intensely, and Barry thought that his face, where it was not concealed by his beard, had turned pale.

The Russian glanced towards the door; involuntarily his hand followed his gaze. In that instant Barry leaped. His right foot, flung upward violently, caught Cherniavski on the right arm. The gun dropped to the floor. As he stooped to recover it Barry struck him with the full force of his bunched shoulders. The Russian crashed against the wall, flinging out his long arms, but before they could seize him Barry had retreated. Then while the other crouched against the wall ready to spring, Barry lowered his head and in the manner of a certain famous prizefighter, charged like a ram. He caught the larger man in the solar plexus, winding him. For a second the Russian's legs seemed to sink beneath him.

He recovered quickly, breathing hard, and attempted to get his arms around Barry, at the same time edging closer to the gun on the floor. Barry retreated towards the window, raised his elbow and broke the glass. He lifted his bound hands against the jagged edge of glass and attempted to sever the rope.

Cherniavski was nearing the gun. Again Barry charged, and the force of his lunge sent the Russian reeling. Recovering, Barry kicked the gun towards the window and stood again with his back to it. He rubbed the rope violently against the broken glass, scratching and cutting his wrists. He felt one strand of rope part. In an instant his hands would be free.

But before he could cut the rope Cherniavski had leaped for him and had encircled him with his arms. Barry felt himself caught in a bear's grip. His face was unpleasantly buried in the Russian's beard. He felt himself falling with the heavier man above him. He struggled violently.

To his relief the rope snapped and his hands were free. But Cherniavski, who had the strength of a sculptor if not the talent, held him firmly as they fell to the floor.

Barry heard as he fell hurried movements upstairs. Madame Cherniavski was aware of the fight. Now she came running down. Barry squirmed in the tight embrace of the other. If only he could reach the gun. It was a hand's throw from where they had fallen. He strove to reach out, inch by inch, at the same time dealing short-arm blows to the other man's back.

The door was thrown open. In a flash Madame Cherniavski had reached the window and seized the gun as Barry's fingers were touching it.

"Get away, Feodor, and I'll kill him now. It will save trouble."

Never had Barry heard such cold and merciless words. He realized that if he allowed himself to be disentangled from Cherniavski he was doomed. He hung on desperately.

But the Russian was stronger. He got up, lifting Barry with him, and then flung him across the room. Barry closed his eyes, expecting a shot.

It did not come.

Instead, as he opened his eyes again, he saw a look of abject horror on the face of Madame Cherniavski. The hand in which she had held the gun a second before had gone to her throat. Behind her, Barry saw, stood a man just outside the window. He, too, held a gun in his right hand—a six-shooter; in his left the one he had silently taken from the woman.

There was something familiar about the man. He was large, heavy-set, with long arms and huge shoulders. He held his revolver at his hip. His hair beneath a wide-brimmed soft felt hat was iron-gray. An exclamation came to Barry's lips.

"Susan's friend!" he murmured.

Undoubtedly it was the man who had taken Susan from the Drake house. His

movements were similar, his appearance the same, except that now he wore no mask.

The man lifted the window sash with his left hand and climbed into the room.

Barry saw that both the Cherniavskis were terror-stricken.

"Didn't expect me, did you? Thought I was thousands of miles away, didn't you? Well, I was—but I'm here now." He turned to Barry. "Pretty close shave for you, young man. She'd have potted you in a minute. Glad I got around in time."

"Steve Jocelyn!" gasped Madame Cherniavski, as if she had just awakened to a realization of the man's presence.

"That's me, Katie! Make yourselves comfortable, folks. Vollmer's on his way here. Then you'll all take a ride."

Cherniavski turned upon his wife. A torrent of Russian he heaped upon her. The burden of it, evidently, was that he blamed her for what had happened. She looked scornfully at him and tossed her head.

"Idiot!" she said.

CHAPTER TEN

THAT evening Barry dined with Susan and Steve Jocelyn. They chose a secluded booth in an inconspicuous restaurant. Susan, Barry thought, looked lovelier than ever before. Her experience had given her a new tenderness, an expression that made her even more appealing. She wore a simple black gown with a white lace collar. Barry wondered again how Vollmer, credited with unusual astuteness, had ever dared suspect her.

"As I was saying," observed her uncle, who had played so important a part in the events of the day, in response to Barry's questions, "I was buried up there in the copper country for ten years. I was always intendin' to come out, but never seemed quite able to manage it. Every chance I got to send out a letter to Sue by Indian I did. But that was darned infrequent, and after she left school she didn't get them. Still, I wasn't worried about her, 'cause I had left enough in the bank to take care of her. But when the banker wrote me, long after she left school, that she had moved to New York, I did get worried. I made up my mind to come out as soon as the ice broke if I lost the claim.

"And finally when I did get out the first thing I found in Seattle was a letter from Bob Drake. Lord, I hadn't heard from him in years, though I knew, of course, what he'd been doing. Well, sir, you could have slapped me over when he wrote me that Sue was his secretary, and the best he ever had! It seems she had just applied for the job, and as soon as he saw her name and asked her a few questions about herself he hired her. He knew then that she was his old partner's niece, but he wouldn't tell her until she had made good—'cause he might have to keep her if she wasn't any good. Old Bob was always cautious! Well, he wrote me to come on and see her, and offered to send me any amount I needed if my luck was bad. I decided to do it, just to surprise little Sue and to see old Bob, but the next page of his letter made me decide quicker than ever.

"Here's where Katie comes in. Bob told me this Cherniavski woman, with her Russian man, was trying to prove that she was his daughter. The nerve of her; but Katie always did have nerve, even in her old dance-hall days."

"Wasn't she really a Russian?" asked Barry, who was still perplexed by the rapid series of events.

"Russian? About as much as I am!" laughed Jocelyn. "I've known her since she was a kid. She was born in Alaska. She picked up Russian young from a lot of miners. And she got all she knew about old Bob, until she landed here is New York, from me. I told her about him once when I saw his picture in a magazine and read all about how he had made a pile of money. We were partners in the first of the gold-rushes, long before the Klondike. We cleaned up, and Bob went back to the States. Yes, he was married, all right. Mighty nice girl, too, but they couldn't get along—too many relatives. She was all for stayin' in a little town and queening it over the bunch, and her folks wanted her to. Bob was cut

out for bigger things. So they agreed to separate, and was good friends about it. Bob gave her more than half of his stake, and she was fixed comfortably for life. Then he came on to New York.

"I told Katie all this about Bob, just kind of showing off because he had made so much money and because she was the only woman I had talked to—she was just a kid then—in a long time. I never thought she'd remember it and try to use it this way.

"When Bob wrote that she was trying to prove she was his daughter I ran out and bought a ticket. He was suspicious of her, but he wanted to treat her just. He was always square. She claimed that she was born six months after the separation between him and his wife, and that her mother had let her think—until a little while before she died, and she had the date of the death and everything straight—that she was the daughter of Mrs. Drake's second husband, a man she had married after getting a divorce from Bob. Before Mrs. Drake died, so Katie told Bob, she had told her the truth—that she was his daughter. Now she wanted to collect."

"How did she dare?" asked Susan.

"Katie would dare anything! And besides, she thought I was dead long ago; and she figured a man in Bob's position didn't dare have a scandal come up.

"I got there just too late. Poor old Bob!"

"But I don't understand the events of that night," said Barry, and he recounted briefly what he and Geraghty had heard and seen, and what happened her.

"I don't *know* just what happened," replied Jocelyn, "but as I see it, here's what happened: I saw Bob at his office that afternoon. He told me Katie and her man were coming to make a demand that night. He wanted me to be there, and he gave me a key to the house, so he could dismiss the servants. He said Sue would be there, too. I was to confront these two and prove they were liars. Well, when they came Sue let them in and then Bob dismissed her to talk things over until I showed up. Sue went down to a room on the second floor, where she had a typewriter. Eh, Sue?"

"Yes," she nodded, "and then, not long after I heard——"

"You heard the shot," went on her uncle. "Bob must have got mad and told 'em what I had said. And Katie, after trying a bluff, maybe, went crazy—she had an awful temper, always—and shot him. They had a car waiting for them in front of that studio, with that Russian Ivan and that bobbed-haired girl in the junk-shop in it. These two got scared when they heard the shot and beat it. I'm glad Vollmer got them, too. Sue heard it, too, and ran upstairs. Katie must have been scared, 'cause she dropped her gun. Then she and her man beat it out of the room, maybe just as Sue went in the other door."

"Yes," said Susan. "That's when I heard them say they would meet at 19 Essex street. She told Cherniavski to be there. That's why it stayed in my mind. And then I saw Mr. Drake and screamed. That was what you heard, Barry. I was so frightened I didn't know what to do. I ran from Mr. Drake to the door. Finally I opened it and looked down to see if they were still in the house. I called Grimm, too, but he didn't answer. I was so confused. But I didn't see them again—they had got out some way. And suddenly the lights went out. I picked up the telephone and couldn't get central. Then I heard some one coming in the front door downstairs. I ran back into the room to see what I could do for Mr. Drake. But he was dead then."

"I was coming in the front door," her uncle took up the story. "These two, Katie and her man, must have got out the back way, and over the fence to the studio. But first they had cut the wires which come in at the rear of the house. When they found the car gone they must have decided to lay low in the studio. I had heard the shot, and I ran up the stairs. That was when Sue picked up the gun. She thought I was another. As soon as I saw her I had an idea what had happened. She didn't know me till I told her who I was. Then I heard Grimm moving around, and I put her behind the curtain, where you found her. I didn't know it was Grimm. Besides, I had seen you and Geraghty down

the street. I ran into the storeroom to look out into the back yard. The room was unlocked, because Bob had opened it earlier to get out something—an old record book. I didn't see anything.

"Then you and Geraghty answered Grimm's call. I had to lay low myself, if I was to get on Katie's trail. I didn't have time for answering the police's questions. Besides, it's always been my way to go after the man I want alone. I was in the storeroom when you came in, but I had pretty well covered myself with books and papers, and neither you nor Geraghty looked very closely. All you could see were the marks on the window-sill where I had leaned out.

"While you were in the study I was praying that Sue wouldn't breathe. I was afraid you would find her. And I knew that things would look mighty bad for her, 'cause nobody but Sue and me knew that Katie and her man had been there. When Geraghty left you alone in the room I decided to take a chance. I had heard your name, and Bob had told me that afternoon that you were goin' with Sue. Well, you know the rest."

"But how did you get out of the house?" demanded Barry.

"Down the stairs to the second floor, and then down the back stairway. I had to take a chance, but Geraghty was so busy blowin' his whistle he didn't see us, and the back stairway was dark. Then we went through the yard and I lifted Sue over the fence and into the alley. If I had known that Katie was in there I'd have settled her hash then."

"And then?"

"Why, I took Sue to my hotel and made her stay there. Then I got out after Katie. That's why I made a mask out of my handkerchief, so you wouldn't know me if you saw me again. I wanted to follow Katie without anybody spottin' me. Then after I saw the way the police looked at things, suspecting Sue, I tried to get her to leave town. I didn't want her dragged to jail. But they got her, and I knew then I just had to get Katie."

"And you did!" said Barry. "You got her very neatly. How did you get there when you did?"

"I picked up that Ivan fellow down on Essex street, and trailed him all day, hoping he'd lead me to them. He did at last—just when she was taking a good aim at you!"

"Oh, Barry, I told you to be careful!" exclaimed Susan. "I shouldn't have sent you there. If you had been shot, I——"

"What?" asked Barry, leaning across the table.

"I should have died!" said Susan, blushing furiously.

"Well, you're both alive and well," laughed her uncle. "And I don't see any reason for you not being as happy as the birds in spring."

"We shall be happy, shan't we, Sue?" asked Barry, taking her hands.

"Yes," she murmured softly.

"Congratulations!" smiled her uncle. Then he laughed.

"I was just thinking how funny Vollmer was about those fingerprints of yours, Sue. He sure had you proved guilty. He should have known a girl like Katie always wears gloves when she goes out evenings!"

PRISONERS TUNNEL OUT OF JAIL

FORTY-ONE prisoners tunneled their way from the Shelby County, Tenn., jail. Four were captured during the night, and posses were seeking the others early next day.

Sheriff W. S. Knight said the wholesale delivery was engineered by H. Diggs Nolan, who is under sentences aggregating nineteen years in the State and Federal penitentiaries for forgery and violation of the Federal anti-narcotic laws.

The prisoners escaped by digging a hole in a three-foot brick wall, using pieces of an iron cot and a table-knife and fork.

The Telltale Shreds

By DALE D. KIER

A DREARY October day had drawn to a close. A dreary evening saw the city streets crowded with people hurrying to their homes.

One among the throng was not hurrying, nor moving, in fact. He was standing in the shelter of a doorway gazing fixedly at a window in the third story of a building on the opposite side of the street.

The light falling full on him revealed a young man of slight build, and with a pale, haggard face which looked prematurely aged. Hard lines were about the boyish mouth, and there was a half-pathetic, half-defiant expression in the large brown eyes, as he read, in a low tone, the sign on the window: Beal & Bronson, Brokers. Used to be Beal, Bronson & O'Neil," he went on. "They left my name out of the firm when I became known as Convict 1407. Five years in the pen and my money in their clutches! That's what Beal and Bronson did for me. And I swore to get even!"

He stood for several minutes longer, his eyes clinging to the window as if held to it by some magnetic force, then he moved slowly down the street. After walking a block he looked back.

"Yes," he muttered, "that detective, the Big Hobo, is still following me. Once a crook always a crook, the police think. That guy has been on my trail ever since I hit this town. He's looking out for Beal & Bronson's protection, I suppose."

He turned into a side street, walked a couple of blocks and entered a café, where he ordered a cup of coffee and a sandwich. A few moments later the one whom he had styled "Big Hobo" came in.

Terry O'Neil knew that under his coat was a star labeled "city detective." He knew when the officer sauntered to a stool near him and gave an order.

"Big Hobo" timed his supper nicely with Terry O'Neil's, and when the latter rose he rose also and began dogging his footsteps through the streets again.

When Terry went into a pool hall the sleuth went, too; and when, about ten o'clock, Terry rose and walked out, he was still closely shadowed.

At eleven o'clock Terry O'Neil entered the second-class rooming-house where he had stayed the three nights he had been in the city.

"Big Hobo" vanished.

A little later a watcher might have seen Terry slipping silently down a rear stairway outside the boarding-house and slinking along the borders of a black alley. His hands were empty, but his pockets bulged with tools whose purpose many an intelligent person would not know.

"I can never get even with Beal & Bronson," he muttered, as he glided silently among the shadows, "but if I can only get a part of what is my own, I can go elsewhere and make a fresh start. I'll try it, anyway."

Morning dawned with dull, gray skies—promise of another cheerless day. At six o'clock the streets were quiet. Only a few persons were hurrying to their various places of business.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the screeching of a siren commanding the right of way, and a police car went thundering along, closely followed by the coroner's automobile.

Pedestrians stopped to gaze after both machines, wondering what crime had been committed.

A couple of minutes after six the cars drew up before an office apartment building on Francis street.

As Detective Sergeant James Warren stepped from the foremost car a uniformed patrolman came to meet him.

"This way," he directed; "third floor. Man found dead by the janitor."

The coroner joined the two, and as the hour was too early for the elevator to be in operation, the trio proceeded to walk up two flights of stairs. When the third floor was reached Patrolman Casey led the way to a door bearing the name "Beal & Bronson, Brokers."

In silence the men passed through that doorway. The lights were turned on, showing the interior of the room plainly. It was furnished in typical office style, with chairs, desk, safe, etc. The desk, a solid, counter-like affair, with drawers on either side, was placed at one end of the room at some distance from the wall.

"He's behind the desk," Casey said in low tones.

The detective went forward. As he passed the end of the desk he stopped and stood staring.

On the floor lay the body of a man of middle age. He was well dressed and generally neat in appearance. He was lying a couple of feet from the desk, and directly behind a chair drawn up to its side. His right hand clutched a pistol, and from a hole in his temple blood had oozed and trickled down over his face and neck.

Warren's keen eyes took note of everything. The top of the desk was cleared, holding only such necessary articles as are usually seen on a business man's desk. Two chairs were drawn up, one on either side, as if two persons might have been sitting, facing each other, engaged in conversation.

With a pair of pincers Warren lifted the revolver and laid it on the desk; then taking a magnifying-glass from his pocket, he carefully examined the weapon. "Hm!" he muttered, as he picked it up again and dropped it in his pocket. His next action was to take out a fingerprint pad, and for several moments he was busy with the lifeless hand. Then he rose and motioned to the coroner.

The latter knelt down and proceeded with the usual examination, and while he was thus engaged Warren's eyes roved slowly about the room and came to rest on the safe.

"You say the janitor found the body?" he inquired of Casey.

"Yes."

"Fetch him up."

When Casey left the room Warren went to the safe and busied himself again with his fingerprint outfit. Then he went back to the desk.

Among the articles on its top was a closed check-book. He raised the cover and his eyes opened a trifle wider as he saw the top check was partially filled out. The check was dated the preceding day. The amount was not filled in, nor was the signature attached; but following the words, "Pay to" was the name, Frank S. S———. The last name was unfinished.

Warren placed the check-book in his pocket with the revolver. As he did so something else on the desk attracted his attention. Something of no particular significance, perhaps, nevertheless he rolled it up in a piece of paper and added it to his collection.

Satisfied that the desk top held nothing more of importonce, Warren walked entirely around it, scrutinizing the floor. Suddenly he paused. In front of the chair on the opposite side of the desk from where the dead man lay were several pieces of paper. He picked them up and laid them carefully on his palm. They fitted together easily, and formed a single sheet of white note paper—a sheet of note paper torn into shreds! Warren gazed at them thoughtfully, trying to solve their meaning.

The doctor rose. "Death caused by a bullet through the brain," he stated. "Been dead about six or seven hours. Looks like suicide, don't you think?"

"Appearances are such as might lead one to believe so," Warren said slowly. "I have picked up a few clues, if this is a murder, which may not mean anything at all, but I'm going to investigate them. Ah, here's the janitor."

The latter was a stoop-shouldered, gray-haired man, well past middle age. Warren greeted him with the question: "You were the first to discover the dead man?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know who he is?"

"Mr. Bronson, sir, of Bronson & Beal."

"At what time did you find him?"

"About 5:45, I'd say," was the prompt reply. "I came to work at 5:30, and am usually in the basement about fifteen minutes before I get up here."

"Did you notice anything unusual when you first came in?"

"Nothing, sir. The door was fast. It fastens with a spring lock. I opened it, came in, switched on the light and went around putting up the window-shades. When I was passing the desk I saw him. I knew it was time for Officer Casey to be passing, so I went and told him, and never said a word to any one else."

"Glad you did. Saved us having a lot of curious folks around in the way. According to the doctor, then," he went on as if speaking to himself, "Bronson came to his death about eleven or twelve o'clock." Then he asked abruptly: "What time does Bronson's partner come?"

"About 7:30."

"Half an hour yet," Warren observed after a glance at his watch. "We'll wait for him. Do you do all the cleaning here in the office?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Which means that you sweep, dust, clean cuspidors, empty cigar trays, etc.?"

"Yes, sir."

"You did all that last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"What time did you get through?"

"6:30."

"What time did Bronson leave the office?"

"He went to lunch at six and came back at seven. I left just after he came back."

"What time did Mr. Beal leave?"

"At half-past five. He didn't come back at all. He told me when he was leaving that he wouldn't come back."

"Then whatever little is here was made after Bronson came back?"

"Why, yes." The janitor's eyes went around the neat room as if vainly seeking the litter mentioned.

"Were Mr. Beal and Mr. Bronson good friends?" Warren asked next.

"So far as I know," was the reply, "but they both had enemies."

"You do not know whether Mr. Bronson had a visitor while he was here last night?"

"No; I cannot say as to that."

"And you're positive you cleaned up everything—especially the ash-tray?"

"Yes, sir; but what's that got to do with it?" the janitor exclaimed in surprise.

Before Warren could reply the door opened and a man entered. He was about fifty years of age, with a stout figure, heavy-jowled face, deep-set, dark eyes and iron-gray hair. He stopped short and gazed questioningly at the group gathered in his office; then he stepped briskly forward, demanding: "What's up?"

"You are Mr. Beal, I presume?" Warren returned. "Your partner, Mr. Bronson, was found dead here this morning."

"Dead!" Beal threw up his hands and staggered back, his florid, smooth-shaven face paling. "Impossible! Where is he?" he added, his eyes darting here and there.

"Behind the desk yonder," Warren informed him.

Beal's hand met and clasped behind his back, but he made no motion to go forward. "How did it happen?" he asked at length.

"He was shot through the brain. There was a pistol in his right hand," Warren explained.

"Looks like suicide, don't it?" was Beal's comment. "To tell the truth, I'm not much surprised," he added. "Bronson's been gloomy lately. Domestic troubles, I guess."

"If you'll excuse my saying it," the janitor spoke up, "it might have been a burglar. Maybe he wanted to rob the safe, and——"

"Not likely," Beal interrupted, but Warren interrupted him in turn by saying:

"Not a bad idea, and we may as well look into the matter. I suppose you know what the safe contains, Mr. Beal? Will you see if everything is all right?"

"Certainly." Beal stepped to the safe and nervously whirled the dial. Presently the door opened, showing an interior uncrowded and with packets neatly arranged. Beal reached into the farthest corner, then his hand came back empty! "It's gone!" he cried in startled tones.

"What's gone?" Warren demanded.

"The metal box that had the money in it. It was here when I left the office yesterday evening."

"How much money was in it?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"Any one know the combination of the safe besides you and Bronson?" asked the detective.

"No."

"Did you come back to the office last night, Mr. Beal?"

"No. I think I see a solution to this," he went on hurriedly. "The safe was opened by a professional safe-breaker. He probably came in here when Bronson had gone out for a moment. When Bronson came in and surprised him at work he shot my partner and went on with the robbery. I think I can tell you who he was, too," he went on excitedly. "Terry O'Neil's just out of the pen. He blamed Bronson and myself for having him sent up, and swore to get even. We expected him to make some trouble, but not so bad as this. If you can get Terry O'Neil you'll have the right one."

"I can get him at once," Warren replied. "One of our men has been shadowing him since he came to town. I'll telephone the Chief. In the meantime we will all wait here. Take chairs over there," pointing to the end of the room farthest from the desk. "I have some work to do."

The detective used the telephone, speaking in a tone so low that it was inaudible to the ears of the others. Then he went behind the desk and knelt beside Bronson's body. Deftly his hand searched the dead man's pockets, and from one in the vest he extracted a couple of cigars. After putting them in his own pocket, he rose and joined the others.

"I must take the fingerprints of you two gentlemen," he said, addressing the janitor and Beal.

Neither offered any objections, and having finished his task Warren went back to the desk, where he busied himself making comparisons. When he had finished, he mused to himself: "Both Beal's and Bronson's fingerprints on the safe door. That's natural, of course. But there's a strange print on it, too; and it's not the janitor's. Burglar's, likely—if there was one. And as for the revolver——"

His musings were interrupted by the entrance of two new arrivals, who were none other than Terry O'Neil and "Big Hobo."

"Well, O'Neil," Warren said as he advanced towards him, "I must have your fingerprints."

O'Neil's big brown eyes looked straight into the detective's and he replied coolly: "Not necessary, since I presume you've already got them off the safe yonder."

Warren could not help being mildly surprised at the frank admission. "You admit, then, that the strange print is yours?"

"I do."

"Do you know that by making this admission you are confessing yourself guilty of robbery and murder?"

"Of robbery—or attempted robbery—yes; if you wish to call trying to take what belonged to me by that name. But of murder, no! Bronson was dead when I came here last night!"

In the silence that followed the statement the dropping of a pin could easily have been heard.

It was Terry who broke the silence. "If you want me to tell——"

"Let him tell it to a jury," Beal interposed hastily. "That's the place to tell it."

Warren glanced keenly at Beal, who was plainly agitated and figeted in his chair.

"I believe we'll hear O'Neil's story," he said quietly. "It can do no harm."

"There's not much to tell," Terry began in a straightforward manner. "Six years age I was a locksmith. I fell heir to my uncle's estate and invested the whole of it —ten thousand dollars—with Beal & Bronson, who took me in as a third partner. All went well for a while, and I thought I was

making money; then I found my partners were not playing square with me, or any one else. They were a pair of crooks! I hated crooks. I soon told them so, and what I thought about their dealings, and when I threatened to show them up for a big swindling deal they were planning to put over, they framed a case against me and had me sent up for embezzlement. That's too long a story to tell, but it was a frame-up all the way through. Those crooks made the false charge against me, and a crooked lawyer got me convicted. Beal & Bronson," pointing an accusing finger at the former, "robbed me of all I had, and sent me to prison for five years. Do you wonder I swore to get even with them?" Terry paused a moment, then continued:

"When I came back to this town three days ago the police were immediately on my trail. This officer," flipping his thumb towards "Big Hobo," "thought he saw me safely to bed last night; but I gave him the slip and got away. I got into this building by way of a basement window. As I knew the lay of the land it was no trouble to find my way here. I picked the lock on the door and got in easy enough. I knew the location of the safe, and crawled to it without using my flashlight very much. It didn't take me long to open it. I got the box, shut the safe and then—I don't know what made me do it—I threw the light around the room and saw Bronson lying there. Something told me he was dead! And it scared me so I forgot to wipe the safe off with the rag I had brought for the purpose. I beat it in a hurry, and never thought till I got home that I'd left my fingerprints."

"A fine tale!" cried Beal. "Who'd believe it? Bronson caught you looting the safe and you shot him. It's plain as day."

Again Warren cast at Beal a swift, keen glance. Then he remarked casually: "That will do for the present, O'Neil. You and Morris may go downstairs and wait until I send for you." But as Terry and his escort stepped into the hall Warren followed and closed the door behind him. "Do you smoke, O'Neil?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Cigarettes mostly. Sometimes a cigar."

"What kind of cigars?"

"Any kind I can get. Ten-centers as a rule."

"That's all, O'Neil." But as Warren would have turned back Terry stopped him.

"Say—there's something I didn't tell you. Don't suppose you'll believe it, but that box I took from the safe was empty! So I had all my trouble for my pains, after all."

Back in the office again, Warren paced the floor as if in deep thought, conscious that Beal and the janitor were watching him. "Guess it's time to try out my little clues," he said to himself. "If they prove of any account, I can get this thing cleaned up before the body is removed."

He continued to pace the floor, and presently his hand reached to his vest pocket. As it came away he uttered an exclamation of annoyance. "Pshaw! I want a smoke. Happen to have any cigars, gentlemen?"

"I never smoke anything but a pipe," the janitor said.

Beal promptly drew out a cigar and offered it. Warren lighted it and paced again, puffing contentedly.

"Good cigar," he observed at length.

"Yes, a special brand," Beal answered. "They're expensive, but as smoking is the only luxury I indulge in, I feel I can afford them."

Warren walked to the desk, picked up a sheet of paper and came back to Beal. "It's a belief among us fellows," he said, "that every criminal leaves some clue behind him that will lead to his identity. This case seems to be an exception, unless some little things I have discovered prove to be important. Here's this sheet of paper, for instance," handing it to Beal. "It's covered with figures. Suppose they'll throw any light on anything?"

Beal gave the sheet a hasty glance. "Huh!" he sneered; "some of my own figuring. Did it yesterday."

"So much for that, then," Warren said in a tone of disappointment. "I have another little thing here." He walked away, leaving Beal with the sheet of paper in his hand.

The detective took his stand at the desk, his back towards the two men, his body screening his actions from their view. He placed the cigar Beal had given him beside one he had taken from Bronson's pocket. Then from a small packet he took two cigar stubs and compared them with the whole ones. When his comparisons were finished, he nodded his satisfaction. Again he approached the two men with something in his hand. Then he addressed Beal:

"Do you know any one named Frank B., whose last name begins with S, to whom your partner would have been writing a check?"

"Why, that would be me!" the janitor exclaimed, before Beal could speak. "My name's Frank B. Stone."

"Then it looks as if you might have been here last night," Warren said sternly.

The old man gasped his surprise, and was beginning an emphatic denial when Beal interposed.

"That check don't mean anything, either. Bronson always wrote Stone's pay check on the twentieth—which was yesterday. He was probably interrupted when he was making it out." Beal paused.

The janitor drew a breath of relief.

"Well—so much for another clue," Warren said, slowly.

Beal looked thoroughly disgusted. "If you call them clues, they are mighty slim ones," he burst out impatiently. "What's the use of waiting here all this time? We're not getting anywhere. After what O'Neil confessed, it's plain as day that he is the guilty man."

The detective made no reply. He paced slowly up and down the room several times, hands clasped behind his back, brows drawn as if he were in a deep study. Although he seemed to be paying no attention to the men, a close observer would have noticed that at every turn in his walk he cast a furtive glance in Beal's direction. And after one of these glances his head nodded slightly as if he might be saying to himself: "I thought it. I thought it."

A few more turns, then Warren announced abruptly: "Bring in O'Neil, Casey; I'm ready for him now."

A hush of expectancy fell on the group when at last O'Neil and his guardian stood within the room. For what seemed an eternity no one spoke; then Warren's low, level tones began:

"I am going to tell you the story of what probably happened here last night."

A deeper hush followed the announcement. Breathlessly the listeners waited.

"Bronson very likely was here alone," Warren went on. "He had been busy at his desk for some time and was making out the janitor's monthly pay check when some person came in. Bronson was sitting in the chair behind the desk. The visitor took the chair on this side. The two men immediately got into a discussion. What it was about I cannot say. It was a mild discussion at first, and they smoked while they talked. Then it waxed warmer and they threw their cigars on the ash-tray. Bronson got up and paced excitedly back and forth behind the desk while he talked. The other man picked up a sheet of paper and wrote on it while he was listening.

"Suddenly, in the heat of the argument, the visitor drew a revolver and shot Bronson. Then, after wiping the weapon carefully with his handkerchief to remove all fingerprints, he placed it in the dead man's hand. The proof of this statement lies in the fact that there were absolutely no prints found on the weapon. If Bronson had shot himself his own fingers must have grasped the revolver so tightly as to leave impressions. The instrument of death was placed in the lifeless hand to make Bronson's death look like suicide.

"The murderer's next act was to go to the safe and take money from the tin box, then carefully replace the box in its accustomed corner. His work done, he stole away."

The low voice ceased, and stillness fell again while the detective's keen eyes scrutinized each attentive face. Beal was staring fixedly at the flood. Beads of perspiration stood thick on his brow. Terry O'Neil's arms were folded across his chest, and he gazed fearlessly back as he exclaimed impatiently: "Where do I come in?"

"You came in just as you said," Warren replied. "You found Bronson dead. And

you took from the safe only an empty box!"

Beal started to his feet.

"Wait a minute," Warren said quickly. "A few more remarks and I am through. Bronson's murderer left a couple of clues—slim ones, perhaps, but clues nevertheless. One was part of a cigar—the special brand he always smoked. The other was a pile of paper shreds in front of his chair. From them I deduced that in moments of impatience or nervousness he had a habit of tearing paper into shreds." Warren paused again, and pointed eloquently to a spot in front of Beal's chair. There—torn into shreds—was the piece of paper he had handed him a short while before. "It was your cigar, Beal, and your shreds!"

Beal leaped to his feet. "You think you are smart!" he cried, his eyes blazing with wrath, "and I guess you are. I might have known. But you don't take me to jail. There'll be two jobs here for the undertaker." His hand darted into his pocket and to his mouth. The look he cast at Warren as he dropped back into his chair was one of triumph. Then with an effort he pointed a finger in O'Neil's direction. "Money—give him—it's his!" he said jerkily.

"It's your money, Terry," Warren said later, as he placed a package in the former's hand. "Beal acknowledged that with his last breath. We found the money they stole from you when we searched his apartment. Now for a fresh start in a new place—wherever you choose to go. Good luck, my lad."

There were tears in Terry O'Neil's brown eyes as he wrung the detective's hand and said good-by.

POLICE HUNT FOR A GHOST

THE mystery of the "Haunted House," three miles east of Rome, N. Y., on the Utica highway, was solved recently by State police, when Miss Florence Stoughtenger, 16 years old, admitted she was responsible for noises that caused so much excitement in that neighborhood.

Miss Stoughtenger makes her home with Mrs. Susie Smith in the house where "spirit rappings" were heard by a number of persons on various nights in the last few weeks.

Mrs. Smith complained to the State police that she believed some one was trying to drive her away from home by making strange noises at night. Several times, in the middle of the night, the house echoed with the noise of rappings. It seemed to come from the lower floor one minute and upstairs the next.

The noises continued two or three days, until Mrs. Smith was so terror-stricken she asked that troopers be detailed to watch the house to see if they could solve the mystery. The troopers heard the rappings, but were unable to locate them.

One of the troopers made note of the fact that the noises were never heard when Miss Stoughtenger was in the same room with Mrs. Smith. A new tack was taken in the investigation, and the troopers announced that they were leaving for the barracks that day. Instead of going away they spent part of the night watching Miss Stoughtenger's room.

They were rewarded after waiting more than two hours. The rappings began, and the troopers reported they observed Miss Stoughtenger leaning out of the window of her room and pounding her fist on a board.

The State police say Miss Stoughtenger admitted she had been doing the rapping just because she enjoyed the excitement it caused.

Reports of the mystery rappings spread around the neighborhood after they were heard for the first time and several persons visited Mrs. Smith's home to hear the nocturnal rappings, which were responsible for quite a controversy in that section. Some of the neighbors were sure they were genuine spirit rappings.

The Gray Shadow

By JAMES W, EGAN

DELWYN KARR went only to the door of Sylvia's apartment. The mute query in the girl's dark eyes he answered with a shake of the head, and stooped slightly to let her kiss him.

"I'll say ta-ta, then—until tomorrow."

"You must go, Del?"

She placed her hands appealingly on his shoulders. Sylvia was young, pretty; anxious to love and to be loved. Her touch thrilled Karr as it had ever done; there was vast temptation in the warm, wistful lips. Gentry he freed himself.

"Yes, I have to go, girlie."

Sylvia plucked nervously at the mistlike chiffon around her white shoulders.

"But why, Del?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that now."

"Another woman, perhaps?" Green fires of jealousy flashed in Sylvia's beautiful eyes.

"Little silly!" Kass chided good-naturedly. "There is no other woman. I have a little duty to perform."

"I didn't mean it, Del, dear." Sylvia crept into his arms and nestled closer. "I feel so uneasy. I don't know where you are going, or why you are going; but I am frightened. You mightn't return."

"Silly Syl!"

"Oh, I know I'm goofy, Del, but I do feel funny! I wish you wouldn't go."

"Little sprite, I wish I didn't have to. However, this is not getting anywhere. I must say good-by. Tomorrow I will call—never fear!"

She yielded her young lips in passionate surrender, and he held them so long madness almost overcome him. Finally he pushed her from him amiably and went down the hall, fighting to forget the spell of her eyes, the challenge of her youth. Until the halldoor had closed behind his back the girl remained motionless, her bobbed head bowed.

As a taxi whirled him toward his rooms Delwyn Karr thought hard over a cigarette. And his thinking was more of the girl he had left than of what was before him. Sylvia was a dear little thing; possibly the dearest of the several "little things" Karr had been privileged to know. Looking back over a score of years, he could recall various women and girls who had filled more or less brief phases of his existence. "Love them and leave them" had always been his rather flippant motto. Somehow, though, Sylvia——

"Am I getting soft at my age?" he muttered. "Oh, bosh! We'll break up one of these days, and there'll be some one else. This veteran leopard cannot change his spots." Yet he sensed a flaw in his philosophy, and it took a decided effort to snap out of his growing irritation.

Once in his own quarters Delwyn Karr hustled out of evening clothes and into a suit of gray which had been hanging in a locked wardrobe trunk. He pulled a dark cap over his hair and replaced his oxfords with light, rubber-bottomed shoes. Glancing at the little ebony clock on a mantel, he noted it was just a minute or two after midnight. Grimly he smiled as he stowed two or three serviceable articles about his person.

"The tea-hound and cabaret decoration again becomes the rascal!" he sardonically reflected. "Perhaps if Slyvia knew all about her Del and his duties tonight, she might have reason to feel 'funny'! I wonder why I can't get her out of my mind?"

Slipping unobserved out of the apartment-house by a way he knew well, Karr

headed for the nearby district of the city's most costly homes. His objective was the architectural monstrosity which served as the dwelling place of Morrison Slade, the cannery king, and he had not far to walk. Ten minutes after leaving his rooms he was within Slade's grounds.

The big, ugly house was in darkness. Cautiously Karr reconnoitered. Above a side veranda away from the street a fleck of waving white curtain visible in the partial moonlight indicated an open window. Here was a starting place.

With the skill of a trained athlete Karr scaled his way to this window. His light footwear made entrance into the house soundless. Once inside, feeling his way through the blackness, he progressed slowly and warily.

Abruptly a faint gleam of light caught his quick eyes. It stole out through a door barely ajar. With a hand in his coat pocket Karr dared his way into the room beyond.

A shaded lamp burned on a stand not far from a dainty crib. In this latter was sleeping a very pretty little child. The youngster could not have been much more than two years old.

Realizing he had invaded a nursery, Karr prepared to retreat. The child, he knew, must be the baby girl daughter of Morrison Slade's young wife. Vaguely he wondered why the light had not been turned out.

Before the intruder could withdraw, however, the little one tossed suddenly and awoke. Alarmed at the possibility of an outcry and uncertain of his next move, Karr stepped to the side of the crib. Why the devil had he chosen such a route to enter the place, anyway?

The baby opened sleepy eyes on the invader and without making a cry stretched out a small arm. Involuntarily Delwyn Karr put out his hand. Tiny fingers fastened around his thumb.

"Unkie F'ank!" drowsily lisped the childish lips. "Unkie F'ank, tiss Betty!"

For a moment Karr did not move. The touch of those trusting little fingers affected him oddly—gave him a sensation that he found impossible of analysis.

"Tiss Betty!" the baby repeated.

At any moment the little girl might start crying. Karr acted. He bent and awkwardly pressed the tiny, innocent lips, not at all as he had kissed Sylvia an hour before. Yet somehow he was reminded of Sylvia in doing so.

Following the kiss Karr stood gazing down upon the flushed, innocent face. The sleepy little eyes closed. The grip on his thumb relaxed. The sandman had again come into possession of his childish subject.

On tiptoe Delwyn Karr came out of the nursery and closed the door softly. For a minute his errand in this house was forgotten. His mind was jumbled with incongruous pictures of trustful little fingers and Sylvia's youthful eyes. He had to bring himself to with a decided mental shake.

"What's got into you, you fool!" he scourged himself. "The penitent burglar of the movies melodrama, redeemed by the sweet innocence of a little child—huh? Del, you are positively becoming an old woman! Maybe it was that rotten gin this evening."

But he knew very well gin had nothing to do with it.

Karr picked his way to a lower floor without incident and carefully steered a course to the library. Twice he had visited this house as a guest, and he had a brain for details. In the library was kept a sturdy safe belonging to the cannery king.

Before kneeling in front of the "box" the intruder fastened something over his eyes. In the light it would have been seen to be a silken mask, gray in hue—an appendage which might have helped identify him to various interested police officials as the much-desired "Gray Shadow" — a cracksman who had been looting society homes for many weeks. Once during a nocturnal venture Karr had barely evaded capture, and his description had gone forth. The police, however, had proved quite unable to track him down.

Training a small electric flash on the safe the Gray Shadow set his facile fingers to searching out the combination. He believed Morrison Slade kept a great deal of ready cash in the receptacle. The cannery

king was a man hated in several quarters. More than one newspaper had alluded to him as a profiteering crook—the allusions being fully veiled, of course—and he had a continual round of labor troubles. It was known his life had been threatened, and rumor had it he was always prepared for the worst. To presume he would keep money where he could get at it immediately seemed no more than logic to Delwyn Karr.

The safe was not especially baffling, and after a bit of deft handling the Gray Shadow had the tumblers responding to his skill. And then, just as success was his, he heard a motor roll up the outside driveway and stop. Karr knew he must get out of sight, for whoever was coming home might decide to come into the library.

His flash picked out a curtained alcove between two built-in bookcases as the likeliest hiding-place. Quickly the Gray Shadow secreted himself within this recess.

A few seconds later the library lights were on. Through a division in his concealing curtains Karr was able to see a woman had entered the room. She was gowned and furred modishly, but not expensively.

Recognizing her, Karr's grip on the automatic in his pocket relaxed. This was Norma Slade, the beautiful young actress wife of the cannery king. It was common gossip that Slade, twice her own age, treated her brutally and made her life one of unhappiness. Karr did not doubt the gossip. He held fixed opinions in regard to Morrison Slade.

"What has she been up to?" thought the Gray Shadow. "Slade is supposed to be out of town. And doubtless—ah!"

A young man had also entered the room—a slim, handsome chap wrapped in a big belted overcoat.

"Franklin Burton, the scenario writer. He always handled Norma. They've been putting one over on the old devil."

The hidden cracksman, being an active member of society in the daytime, knew most of its innuendo and "dirt."

Burton seemed to be pleading with Mrs. Slade.

"You must leave him tonight, Norma," Karr heard him utter. "You have lived too long now in the house of this beast. And I love you so much I cannot allow you to stay here."

"Oh, if I could go away, Frank. I want to, but—but I can't."

"It's our opportunity, dear. Your husband—oppressor would be a better term—may return tomorrow. And I'm afraid he is going to learn more than we want him to. Pack a bag and come with me. We'll go where he'll never find us."

"Oh, I want to get away from him, Frank, God knows. The cruel, cruel brute! But there is little Betty."

Betty! Vividly the Gray Shadow recalled a memory of baby fingers clutched around his—the flushed face he had kissed upstairs.

"Unkie Frank, tiss Betty," she had lisped.

So here was "Uncle Frank." It was going to be hard lines for that little child, Karr reflected.

"I know, Norma," Frank Burton said. "Betty makes it a problem. However——"

"I can't leave her with him, Frank. She's all I've had in these bitter years."

"But we can't take her away, dear. I wish we could. But she is his child—as well as yours. To carry away Betty would give Slade the best of excuses to track us down. You must leave her, if only for a little while. You understand, dear?"

"Yes, I understand, Frank. But to abandon my own little baby. Why, she cried when I went away tonight, and I had to leave the light burning so she'd think I was coming back. I can't, I can't go."

Norma Slade suddenly buried her lovely head on the young man's breast and sobbed heart-brokenly. Delwyn Karr squirmed restlessly in his recess.

"Be brave, Norma," Frank Burton whispered. "Ah! What was that?"

Somewhere outside a key had turned in a lock. The click could be heard distinctly in the library.

"The front door. My God! Morrison must have come back ahead of time. Oh, Frank, hide."

The terrified woman shoved the young

man behind a Japanese screen which was nearly directly across the room from Karr's alcove. Desperately she attempted to compose herself, but her face was white and haggard under the lights.

Morrison Slade had returned. The cannery magnate walked into the library, his hands in his overcoat pockets, a malicious look on his sallow face and lurking in his narrow eyes.

"Well, well, my dear," he observed. "Been out enjoying yourself? Rather late hours you keep, aren't they? By the way, don't I see traces of tears?"

"I—I went to a show and it made me kind of blue. I——"

"You're a liar!" She shrank back at his sudden ferocity. "Where is that fellow?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Your lover, my dear. Franklyn Burton, of course. None other."

"I—I have not seen Frank Burton."

"Still lying, eh? Forget that stage training of yours. I know Burton is in this house. You two fools! I've been aware of your game all along, and I've been biding my time. I haven't been out of town. I waited until I could catch Burton and you where I wanted you. I know he's hiding here, and I'm going to shoot him down like I would kill a rat."

"No, no, Morrison. For God's sake."

"Don't become dramatic, Norma. You are not before the footlights now. The unwritten law justifies me in my course. And I'll get rid of you after he's out of the way—also legally. Where is he now? I saw him enter the house, you know."

Slade had drawn a revolver from his right overcoat pocket and was slowly cocking it, apparently with deliberate effect.

"Morrison, think of Betty."

"Betty? Why didn't you think of Betty? As for me, I'm thinking right now of Morrison Slade. Where is Burton?"

The Gray Shadow had grown decidedly uneasy in his recess. Whatever lay in store for Frank Burton, his own situation was precarious. At any moment discovery might ensue. Karr drew his automatic.

Careful as he tried to be, the russet draperies behind which he hid were slightly agitated. The merciless eyes of Morrison Slade, already bent toward the alcove as a possible place of concealment, did not miss the movement. The cannery king quickly leveled his weapon.

"Come out of there, damn you, and take your medicine."

Slade's finger was pressed against the trigger of his pistol. Possibly his own nerves were not fully under control and he exerted more force than he intended. The revolver exploded with a sharp report.

Something smote the Gray Shadow's chest with agonizing irresistibility. Through the draperies and into his lungs tore the leaden missile. Swearing queerly, Delwyn Karr pitched from the alcove, emptying his own automatic as he sagged down.

Even as he sunk to the heavy carpet, however, the Gray Shadow caught the surprise on Morrison Slade's sallow face and the quick change to pain and terror as he crumpled himself under the deadly hail spewed from the automatic.

Norma's husband had extorted his last unclean dollar, had voiced his final harsh word. The Gray Shadow's return fire had been highly effective. Five of the bullets had lodged in Slade's body. A sixth had smashed an ormolu clock as the hands were at seven minutes past one.

The suddenly widowed Mrs. Slade was crying wildly in the arms of the very pale and scared Burton, who had plunged at last from behind the screen. Confused noises echoed throughout the house. The shooting had aroused the few servants and others, and soon the library would be crowded with the curious and gaping.

"Who—who did he shoot, Frank? Where had that man been?" The woman's words penetrated the dazed senses of Delwyn Karr as he gasped painfully on the floor.

"A thief, Norma. It seems to be the cracksman they call the Gray Shadow—see his mask. What a horrible mess! Slade must have died instantly."

"Whatever will become of us now, Frank?" she sobbed.

These idiots! These dumbbells! Delwyn Karr struggled for speech.

"This is the—the luckiest thing ever happened for—for you. A way out," he said thickly. "Three of you—had come together. Heard me at—safe. Slade—had gun. Rushed in—first. Shot. Fire—returned. Both done for. Simple—damn simple. Can't—can't blame you."

"Norma, dear, he's right. It is the way out—the best possible way out, for now there is no need to leave Betty. You are free now." Burton knelt by the gaping burglar. "He's got you, old man, I'm afraid. You are a white man, at that. You must have heard what he said—you know the kind of beast he was. Even dead, I hate him, for I am not her lover. She is my sister, but dared not tell him as he and I were enemies."

"Slade never was—any damn good. Hope to God—you will be," feebly choked the Gray Shadow.

The voice of a baby, crying, came faintly from above.

"It's Betty, Frank. The shooting alarmed her. I must go to her."

Delwyn Karr knew the end must be very near for him. Dimly he felt himself being lifted to a couch, heard a babel of talk. The library must be thronged. Probably he had been recognized. Delwyn Karr, society idler and the Gray Shadow, one and the same. Some would be surprised, no doubt, when the news was broadcast.

Abruptly came the thought of Sylvia. She really had cared—that was why she had been afraid earlier. And he had never played quite fair with Sylvia.

Once it had been his belief he was living richly; now, too late, all his proud philosophy seemed so barren. Strange how clearly his brain functioned these last remaining moments. Well, eternity was just ahead, and—damn it. Why did the same pictures persist in haunting him? Little Betty's trusting fingers in his—Sylvia's eyes raised in supplication.

When the coroner arrived the features of the Gray Shadow were set wistfully, as one who has peered across the threshold but never has stepped within.

THE CRIME WAVE

THe Prohibition Law is responsible for the increase of crime, according to Leon C. Weinstock, State Commissioner of Prisons, who sailed on the United American Liner *Resolute* for Hamburg recently.

"Prohibition," said the Commissioner, "drove thousands who were used to a little alcoholic stimulant to use drugs, and they have crime tendencies drug addition involves.

"Lately there were under restraint in Sing Sing 1,400 prisoners, the largest number ever there at one time in the history of the prison.

"Of course," continued the Commissioner, "the war had a lot to do with crime, that is, crimes of violence. It taught young men to use firearms, a knowledge they did not generally possess before the war. Human life lost its value to men who saw thousands picked off on the battlefield.

"The love of finery and luxuries also has a tendency to increase crime. There are men and women who will not stop at anything to get fine clothes and luxuries."

The Commissioner declared it was his belief the present generation is suffering from nervous disorders with marked tendency to degeneracy. He said the condition was quite apparent among younger prisoners in State institutions.

While abroad Commissioner Weinstock will study European penal systems. One subject of interest, he said, was the problem of compensation to prisoners who work.

Forged Fingerprints

By TOM FOX (Scotland Yard Detective)

IN my experience as a detective I've run across a great many fingerprint bits of evidence, but the most baffling are those that are forged. By forged I mean those that are manufactured by criminals to mislead the police. I once found dozens of them on the scene of a crime, but the crook overdid it by leaving too many around in conspicuous places, and that's what gave his little game away. Most innocent citizens think fingerprint evidence is infallible, but detectives, policemen and other experts whose duty it is to investigate such evidence, have long known the tricks employed by underworld characters to evade the law. It is really what might be termed a counter-offense operation. As soon as the huge army of crooks in the world learned the deadly sureness of conviction by the fingerprint method they set about to destroy the value of fingerprints as evidence. This was done to protect themselves. Perhaps the most skillful of these cunning inventors were German crooks. Their new devices were soon exported and were put in common use from Berlin to San Francisco.

The earliest method of avoiding the impression of fingerprints was the use of gloves, but Monsieur Stockis of the crime detection bureau of Liege evolved an accurate system by means of which certain peculiar impressions left by a law-breaker wearing gloves could still be detected, and gave faint clues to the man's identity. The new method was, of course, sent to the police departments of all the big cities and was tried out as soon as an opportunity presented itself. In the city of Lyons there was a criminologist named Doctor Locard who had become quite famous. He was the first one to make a real success of the Stockis system by discovering enough finger impressions to convict a burglar. Instead of using gloves, the cracksman had taken the precaution to wrap his fingers in strips of cotton cloth; but they left prints that exposed his identity. When the system was tried out in this country by our experts, they hit upon the most effective method of destroying the glove plan. The plan was to find the glove that left the prints. When this was done the glove fingers were turned inside out, and the crook's fingers, sweating inside the glove, left his prints on the inside of the glove fingers. When the police became familiar with this procedure, the burglars resorted to the rubber stamp fingerprint. These forged prints are usually produced by ordinary plaster moulds into which are pressed the fingertips of an outsider. Melted rubber composition is then poured into the mould, and the fingerprint comes out in the form of a rubber stamp. The crook bandages his hands and leaves the fake prints on the scene of his transgressions with the rubber stamps. For a while these manufactured prints fooled the police, but in time they learned the trick, for a rubber stamp cannot produce the tiny marks of nature, as was shown when the fakes were put under the magnification of a microscope. No forger of fingerprints can imitate the little spots in the impression a real finger will leave—the spots formed by the sweat glands of a man's fingertips. By detecting this the police can easily separate the false from the genuine marks left by a crook.

Forged fingerprints developed a new science called "Poroscopy," which American, French, English and the German police have added to their convict curriculum, and they are aided by the most eminent chemists and authorities on medico-criminal mat-

ters. The object of chemistry in this branch of investigation is for the analysis of substance clues. Battling such an array of talent the crooks recently abandoned the rubber stamp method for the photo-engraving process. In this case the forgeries of fingerprints are almost perfect. It is accomplished as follows: The crook obtains a fingerprint and photographs it. A photo-engraving half-tone is made of it, and is used like the rubber stamp. In this case the photo-engraving is an exact duplicate in every minute detail of human digits, even under the microscope. Such prints are said to have deceived the police when they first appeared, but as soon as the secret of their manufacture leaked out scientists began to develop a way to baffle these forgeries. As the criminalogists are not telling how it is done, we cannot explain it here. Fingerprint study has shown that the tiny sweat glands require 20 diameter enlargements to make them visible when magnifying. They never change position throughout a crook's life, and are a sure method of identification when photos of prints are compared with the collection of criminal prints in our Rogues' Galleries. It must, of course, be known that the authorities have fingerprints, photographs and Bertillon measurements of every crook arrested within the past decade. In cases where crimes are committed by people who have no police record, it is, of course, very difficult to locate them, as there are none of their fingerprints in the police departments. But when located their fingerprints have frequently established their guilt.

CALLED BANDIT AID

IN the arrest recently of an employee in the General Post Office whose job had been to handle outgoing registered mail, police and post-office inspectors believed they had found the key to several mysterious robberies, including the hold-up of a truck in West 12th street June 11 and the taking of upward of $100,000 worth of jewels therefrom.

The prisoner was known at the general post-office as Charles Abrahamson, but his real name is said to be Abrahams. Police say he has been arrested three times for burglary or grand larceny and on Feb. 27, 1917, was sentenced by Judge Rosalsky of General Sessions to serve from two to three years in State prison for a part in a $20,000 silk robbery.

Notwithstanding this, the police say Abrahams told the postal authorities in 1921 he had an unblemished record. Since then he has been working steadily in the post-office, where he was in a position to obtain information of great value to bandits.

The arrest was the result of detective work by Acting Captain Gegan and Detective Sergeant Browns of the Police bomb squad and Post-office Inspectors Holladay and Butler. These officers will not reveal the information on which they implicate the man in the robbery of June 10, but assert he will be charged with acting in concert with the perpetrators of that crime.

Abrahams's job was to operate "the bucket," an elevator carrying registered mail packages to the platform from which they are loaded into trucks. Six days before the West 12th street robbery he reported sick and unable to work.

He was on sick leave at the time of the robbery, but police say his familiarity with matters at the post-office was such that he could easily have known the jewels were due to come through June 10.

The gems were on the way to the stores when ten bandits in two automobiles held up the truck, beat the guard and drove away with the valuables, kidnaping the driver. Several men have been arrested since and held on suspicion for the robbery.

The Toy Salesman

By EDWARD ETTINGER

"HEY, there, just a minute," I heard some one shouting.

Since there were no other cars on the road, I surmised that he meant me. I put my foot on the brake, stopped the car and waited for him to come up to me.

"Are you going down to Hempstead?" he asked in a drawling voice.

I nodded my head.

"Will you do me a favor?" he continued. "There are a couple of nuns at my house who want to go down there. Will you drive them over?"

"Surely," I answered. "Tell them to come out."

"It won't interfere with your business, will it?" he asked.

"No, not at all."

He glanced at the grip that lay on the seat beside me.

"What are you selling?" he inquired.

"Toys and stationery—wholesale only."

"Say," he broke in suddenly, "can you drive a Cadillac?"

"I can drive any car on the market," I replied boastfully.

"All right," he answered in a satisfied manner. "Wait a minute and I'll bring the nuns out."

Within a few moments he came out with two nuns, clad in their flowing black garments. I paid no particular attention to them as they seated themselves in the back of my car. The farmer slammed the door shut and then turned to me.

"Drive down to Hempstead," he said, "and they will tell you where to let them off."

I nodded my head, stepped on the gas and off we went.

I glanced into the mirror in front of me where I could see the reflection of the two nuns, but it was impossible to see their faces, for they both sat with their heads down. One of them seemed to be very fidgety. She continually kept looking at the road through the glass in the back of the car. In spite of her actions, she managed to keep her face from my view.

Suddenly I felt something cold against the back of my neck.

"Give her more gas," a masculine voice commanded.

I glanced into the mirror and saw the thick, horny fist of the man holding a threatening gun. That hand belonged to a man and not a woman.

"Speed her up," came the second command, in sharp, biting words, "or I'll drill you through."

"Yes, and we mean it, too," added the other nun, in a base voice which could never come from the throat of a woman.

For the moment I was surprised and then I became deeply interested.

I stepped on the gas and very shortly the speedometer registered thirty, thirty-five and forty. We were tearing along at a mad pace, and I hoped that no motorcycle cop would come after us, for I hated the idea of getting a summons to court.

"If you don't mind," I said in a timid voice, "please put that gun away. It might go off accidentally."

"You're afraid, eh?" the nun sneered. "Well, you better do as we tell you or it will go off. Any one behind us, Joe?"

The nun called Joe looked through the back of the car and then said over his shoulder: "Coast is clear, Frank."

The gun was still pressed to the back of my neck.

"Turn up the next road," Frank ordered.

I turned up a narrow lane which was very much sheltered by the growth of trees

on either side. There was just room enough for one car there and it led to a little green farmhouse.

"Drive around to the back door," Frank ordered.

When I stopped the car, Joe got out and opened the door with his keys. I was then told to follow, with Frank right behind me.

"What's your name?" Frank asked of me.

"Bert Henderson," I answered.

"You sell toys and stationery, don't you?"

I nodded my head, remembering that I had told that to the farmer.

"Well, listen," he said. "Whether you want to or not, we're going to hire you for the rest of the day. And we'll pay you well, too. If you promise to keep your mouth shut, we'll give you five hundred dollars when we're through with you."

"Five hundred dollars!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes," he replied. "You'll get it if you do as we tell you. And if you don't do as we say you'll get paid with lead."

"All right," I said. "I'd rather take the first part of the bargain."

He lead me up to a room on the first floor and from the closet took out a military uniform, that of a sergeant of the United States army.

"I don't know whether it will fit you exact," he said, "but put it on just the same. Be quick about it, too, 'cause we've got a lot of work to do."

With that he walked out of the room and I heard him going down the stairs.

I wondered should I see it through or should I try to escape? I walked over to the one window in the room and saw that it was bolted and the shutters were held together by a chain and lock. It would be impossible for me to get out that way. For me to try to resist these two men was out of the question, for they were both strong and muscular. I was no match for either one of them.

I shed my clothes and put on the military outfit, which was a trifle too large for me.

"Hey, there, Bert," I heard Frank shouting from below. "Get a move on. We're waiting for you."

I walked down the stairs, and when I entered the room I stopped on the threshold in surprise. There stood Frank and Joe dressed in army uniforms. Frank had a star on his shoulder, a brigadier general, and Joe had two stars, that of a captain. A broad grin crept across the face of each of them as they beheld my surprise. They were both hard-looking men—Frank with his prominent cheek bones and Joe with his sneaky, leering eyes.

"Do we look like big guns now?" Frank asked with a snicker.

I clicked my heels together and saluted them. They broke out in boisterous laughter.

"Gee, do we look as real as all that?" Frank asked, attempting to return the salute.

"Come on," Joe broke in. "Cut the comedy. We've got work to do."

I followed them out of the house and into the barn. There stood a car painted an army gray. Over the back window hung a red flag with one star, a brigadier general's car.

"You said you can drive any car on the market," Frank said, reminding me of what I had told the farmer. "Hop to it, now."

I took my place at the wheel and they sat on the back seat. Before I started the car I felt something poked into the hollow of my back.

"It's only me," Frank said. "I'm reminding you that if you try any funny work I'll send you to a place where you won't have to sell any more toys and stationery. Now ride straight out to Rockaway."

There was nothing else for me to do, so I drove this fake general and captain out to Rockaway. This was in the winter time and that pleasure resort was quite deserted. I followed their instructions all the way over. They seemed to know every road and every crossing. Finally they told me to drive up a street that led to the beach. There were small four-room bungalows on either side, but not a sign of life in any one of them. In fact, these bungalows were

never occupied during the winter months for they had no heat whatsoever.

When I stopped in front of the one they designated, Joe got out of the car, took some keys from his pocket and entered the bungalow.

In about five minutes he came out carrying a grip in either hand. He placed them in the back near the "general," and then took his place beside him.

"Now drive us to New York," Frank ordered.

For brazenness this pair could not be matched. The idea of deliberately riding through the streets of New York and not fearing detection. I had never seen anything as bold and as daring in all my life. I wondered what was in those grips. No doubt that would solve the whole mystery.

Curiosity got the better of me. I spoke to them over my shoulder.

"What's in those grips?" I asked.

"None of your damn business," Joe shouted gruffly.

"Hold on, there," said Frank. "That's no way for a captain to speak. Excuse him, sergeant. I'll tell you what's in there. It's some old clothes of mine."

I did not say another word to them during the remainder of the trip. I followed their instructions and drove the car up in front of a house in a fashionable part of the city. I did wonder how these rough characters came to this section, which was considered exclusive.

We all got out of the car and I was told to carry the grips inside. They were quite heavy, much too heavy for clothes. Frank opened the door with his keys and let us in. The house was unoccupied.

"Well, your day's work is done," Frank said to me, as he handed me five crisp one-hundred-dollar bills. "Now remember, don't mention this to any one, for if you do you'll get a bullet through you. You'll go back to the farmhouse now with Joe and you'll change your clothes. Then Joe will go home with you to see where you live so we'll be able to get you if we want to. Understand? We mean business."

"It's all right," I assured them. "You needn't worry about me. I don't see any harm in what you did."

I left the house with Joe and drove the car back to the farmhouse. Joe changed his clothes downstairs, while I went up to the room to change mine. I shed that uniform just as fast as I could and got into my own clothes. Now my time had come to play a part in this mystery, whatever it was. There were a thousand suspicions in my mind, but I was not positive of any of them. I felt sure, however, that I had taken part in something criminal and I was determined to find out just what it was.

I still had my gun where I had been carrying it all through the day's experience. They did not suspect me of carrying one, and so did not take the trouble to search me.

"Hey, there, get a move on," Joe shouted from below. "I'm all ready."

"Come on up here, will you?" I called down. "I can't get these darn leggings off."

As I heard him coming up the stairs, I slipped behind the door. The moment he entered the room I dug the snout of the gun into the hollow of his back.

"Throw up your hands," I ordered. Then I turned and faced him.

There was a puzzled expression on his face as he raised his hands above his head. I relieved him of his gun and stuck it into my pocket.

"Now sit down on that chair and put your arms around the back of it."

He sat down as meek as a lamb, still wondering what it was all about. I tied him to that chair just as tight as I could. I tied his arms, his legs and his back. Then to make doubly sure I gagged him.

"I'll send some one for you later," I said as I left.

I locked the door with his keys, got into my car and drove for the city. About two blocks away from the house where I had left Frank, the fake general, I parked my car. I discarded my soft hat and put on a cap which I pulled way down over my eyes.

The question now was how to get into that house without arousing Frank's sus-

picions. I felt sure that he would not open the door without first seeing who was ringing. If I went there alone, undisguised, he would naturally wonder what happened to Joe, and I felt sure that he would greet me with a gun in his hand.

I considered the idea for a few moments and finally struck upon a plan. I walked about five blocks until I found a market. I bought a large shopping basket and filled it with with groceries. I slung the basket on my arm and started walking in the direction of the house.

I went around to the tradesman's entrance and rang the bell. I waited, but I did not hear any one coming to open the door. Was it possible that he had already left the house? I did not think so, for he had promised Joe to wait for him. I rang the bell again and kept my finger on the button.

I heard a window open on the first floor and some one shouted:

"Hey, there, what do you want?"

I recognized Frank's voice, but I pretended not to hear it. I still kept my finger on that button ringing the bell.

"Hey, are you deaf?" he shouted.

I did not even look up. Then I heard the window slam shut. A minute later a light shone in the hallway. He was coming down. I pulled the peak of my cap lower down.

"What do you want?" he demanded as he opened the door.

I noticed his hand near his pocket, ready to grab his gun if necessary.

"I brought the groceries," I said in the voice of a street gamin.

His hand dropped to his side.

"We didn't order any groceries," he said. "You've got the wrong house."

"Throw up your hands," I shouted as I leveled my gun at him.

The surprise was so sudden that he stepped back. In that instant I forced my way into the narrow hallway.

"Keep them up," I shouted, as I relieved him of his gun. "Now walk up. Remember, I'm right behind you, and if you make one suspicious move I'll drill you."

I followed him up the stairs and made him enter the room in which he had formerly been sitting. There, in the corner, I saw the two grips which we had brought from Rockaway. I would soon learn what they contained.

"Now sit down on that chair and put your arms around the back of it," I ordered.

I tied him up with whatever I could lay my hands on. Then I removed my cap and he was able to see just who I was.

"Holy gee!" he exclaimed in surprise. "It's the toy salesman. Say, I didn't think you had any guts in you at all. What's the idea in this hold-up? Want to shake me down for more? Let me up, partner, and I'll fix it up with you?"

"Just one minute," I said. "I want to see what's in those grips."

When I opened them up I found that they contained pure gum opium, in its crude state and shaped in bricks six inches square. The value of those two grips must have been about $60,000.

"Well, well," I remarked, "this certainly is a lucky find, even though it is not in my department."

I immediately telephoned to the chief federal narcotic agent of the New York district and surrendered to him my prisoner, together with the evidence. With two of the men I went back to the farmhouse and got Joe.

Through their confession a very prominent politician was sentenced to a Federal prison. He was the brains of the gang and he conceived the idea of disguising them as nuns at times and also of carrying the stuff openly through the streets of New York in a fake brigadier general's car.

The discovery of this opium-smuggling gang was all a matter of luck. Their regular chauffeur had gone off on a spree and was too drunk to drive the car. They had impressed me in the service for I had seemed an innocent, harmless salesman of stationery and toys.

My real profession, however, is that of a Federal secret service man. I was riding up and down Long Island, pretending to be selling toys, but in reality trying to get information on a gang of counterfeiters.

The Loco Man

By DR. W. J. CAMPBELL

HOW the little place had received the name of Last Chance Camp even its present residents could not definitely say. A number of years before gold had been discovered there, and then followed the mad rush of miners and prospectors to the supposed Eldorado. But the mine proved to be a pocket and was soon exhausted. It had been the last chance for many, taken and lost, and perhaps this had something to do with the name.

Within a month's time every man knew the worst had happened—it was but a pocket soon depleted. If there were others the picks of the few who remained failed to find them. And now the cheaply constructed buildings, which had sprung up as if by magic, were practically uninhabited. Roofs sagged, doors swung ajar, green lumber walls warped in the blistering sun, and paneless windows looked hollow-eyed upon the single deserted street.

Some of the sands of the creeks in the vicinity yielded small quantities of gold, possibly a fair day's wages. A few had remained panning here and there, ever hoping that a mother lode would yet be struck. But the boom had collapsed and Last Chance Camp had been rightly named.

Into this forsaken place came Dan Bradley, or at least that was the name he gave to those of the straggling populace he chanced to meet. Where he came from and what he had been or done no one knew, and perhaps cared even less. Big, uncouth man that he was, they simply guessed him one of their kind and let it go at that.

Bradley took up his abode in one of the deserted cabins and began to pan the gravel on Crooked Creek. No welcome had been extended him by the disheartened residents, but that apparently did not bother Bradley in the least. A close observer would have said he was accustomed to such receptions.

One evening just about dusk Bradley drifted into Jim Daly's store, a forlorn little place at the very edge of the settlement. He was accustomed to making his few purchases here, paying for them out of his little store of placer gold.

When he received his goods Bradley tucked some of them into the ragged pockets of his coat, the others under one arm, then with the other hand he poured shiny particles of gold upon the scales until the desired amount was reached. The transaction completed, he stalked out of the store without a word to any one. As he stepped from the rickety front porch he caught his first glimpse of the stranger.

Tall, angular, yet sinewy, with white hair and beard, he was just mounting the porch from the other end. At first glance he appeared to be a man well along in years. But his face was free from the wrinkles of the aged, and his step was quick and firm as he crossed the porch and entered the store without as much as glancing Bradley's way. Yet that individual halted in his tracks, a post partly concealing him, and watched the stranger until the door closed behind him.

Through narrowed lids Bradley gazed down the single sandy street, while a frown crossed his forehead. He was trying to think where he had seen the stranger before. But unable to recall the occasion he wheeled in his tracks with a muttered curse and headed for his cabin a half-mile down the ravine.

Leaving the narrow trail he struck into the path leading to the hut. When he came in sight of it, something white on the door caught his attention, and half walking, half

running, he hurried forward. There was no mistake; it was a scrap of paper pinned to the sun-cracked panel with a cactus thorn.

Drawing close, Bradley rubbed his eyes. "Now who do you reckon done that?" he mumbled. "An' what the thunder do you reckon they want, anyhow?" By this time he had arrived within reaching distance of the door and, leaning forward, he jerked the paper from its fastening and carried it inside, where by the dim light of a smoky oil light, his eyes bulging, he read the following:

DAN BRADLEY: Tomorrow at dark you will come to the cabin home of The Loco Man. Jim Daly will give you directions how to get there. You must come alone. Your every move is watched and if you attempt to evade this request, the result will be on your own head. Signed,

"THE LOCO MAN."

Bradley gasped. His lower jaw dropped and his face twitched as he reached for his forty-five. Then he laughed harshly, trying to drive away his fear. But the icy hand of an unknown something had gripped his very being. He picked up the scrap of paper and thrust it into his pocket. What did it mean? Who was this Loco Man? As the name implied, he must be some crazy person. Anyhow, he would see Daly in the morning.

Darkness, thick, black and impenetrable, had now settled down over the camp, but Bradley did not let his lamp burn. He was taking no chances, neither did he retire to the hard bed in one corner of the room, but sat in the rickety chair or paced up and down the rough board floor. It could be a joke, but he didn't think so. There must be something behind it, but what?

About two o'clock in the morning, unable to withstand the suspense any longer, Bradley decided to step outside for a breath of fresh air. Carefully and silently opening the door, he listened. The stillness of the night did not release the tension on his nerves. He stepped out into the little yard. Down the valley a lone coyote howled, and the breeze rattled the leaves of the scrub timber at the rear of the hut.

He walked around the corner, hesitating, suspicious. In the distance he could see, dimly, the dark wooded slope that ended at the creek, clear as crystal and as cold as ice, the little stream whose sands he panned every day. He would not be there tomorrow; the note on the door had driven all thoughts of mining from his head.

Bradley had turned to retrace his steps when there was a spurt of fire in the darkness of the timber line on the slope, followed by the staccato, whip-like crack of a rifle. A bullet droned by his head and with a soft spat buried itself in the cabin wall.

"The devil!" blurted Bradley, ducking and jumping around the corner. "The crazy fool has shot at me. Reckon he thinks I'm tryin' to sneak away," and uttering a string of oaths he sprang through the open door, slamming it shut behind him.

Inside he paused, panting for breath. Standing there, he found he was trembling and a strange weakness seemed to possess his limbs. With a grunt he sank into the convenient chair. Never in his life had he experienced anything like this. He was just like some hunted animal. In a moment he grew calmer and, rising to his feet, crept to the little window in the rear and peered cautiously around its frame. However, all was now so dark outside he could see nothing and he returned to the chair, where he sat the remainder of the night. Morning dawned bright and clear with no further disturbance.

With the return of daylight, Bradley partly regained his courage. Roundly cursing himself for losing his nerve, he started for Daly's, resolved to find out all he could of the person who pleased to term himself the Loco Man.

It was early, and Daly had just arrived as Bradley with his usual rough manner slouched upon the porch. "Out kind of early, ain't you?" Daly questioned. "Looks like you hadn't slept well last night."

Bradley swallowed hard, grinned a sickly grin, while he toyed with the ragged edge of his coat, then he slowly raised his eyes. "Reckon I am, Daly, an' I never shut an

eye the whole blamed night. When I got home from the store last night I found this here note pinned on my door," and he fished the crumpled piece of paper from his pocket. "I don't know what it means, an' I never seen this Loco Man. He must be crazy, sure enough, writin' such stuff an' pinnin' it on people's doors. An' that ain't all he done. The crazy fool shot at me last night, or at least I reckon it was him. Now what do you know about him, Daly?"

The storekeeper read the note and handed it back to Bradley.

"That's his writin'," he said. "I've seen it a good many times. He does considerable tradin' here. That was him come in last night just as you left. Now what are you goin' to do about it?"

Bradley leaned against the counter and dropped his head. "I ain't exactly decided yet," he replied. "If you know anything about this crazy feller, let's have it."

"Glad to tell you all I know, Bradley, which ain't very much. About six months before you landed here he blowed in. Just hung around here for several weeks and seemed to be lookin' for somebody or expectin' somebody to drop in. Never had much to say to anybody an' spent most of his time scoutin' around through the hills. Nobody knows his name, an' the boys' thinkin' him a crazy prospector, got to callin' him 'The Loco Man.' When he heard it he just smiled an' said that was as good a name as any.

"But if he is crazy he knows gold, an' always seems to have plenty, an' nuggets, too! The boys all think he's got a cache back there in the hills where he lives in a little two-room shack. He's always seemed peaceful enough an' that's about all I know about him. Bradley, I can tell you where to find his place, but I can't advise you what to do. You do just as you please. I have always heard it said it is best to humor crazy folks."

Bradley uttered a short forced laugh. Why should he fear this evidently feeble-minded man? He would not! He was big and strong, well able to take care of himself. Perhaps he might be able to get some of this gold if he went, and his greedy eyes sparkled at the thought. Mumbling his thanks to Daly, he turned and ambled from the store.

Returning slowly to his cabin, Bradley was surprised to find a second note pinned to the door. Uttering a string of curses, he jerked it down and read:

BRADLEY: Remember, tonight at dark. Come, and come alone, and attempt no trickery, for you will be watched; don't forget that. You will see and hear something that will surprise you. Attempt to evade this request and suffer the consequences. All shall be made clear to you when you come. Signed, THE LOCO MAN.

All that day Bradley loafed around his cabin. He saw no one but those he was accustomed to see every day. About an hour before dark he closed the door and started in the direction of the stranger's home, determined to see the thing through. Being an unskilled woodsman, he crushed noisily on his way and struck camp when in sight of the hut, where he awaited the coming of darkness. There was a death-like stillness in the mountain fastness. Here and there a bird twittered in the scrub timber, or a pebble dislodged by the foot of some night prowler went clattering down the rocky slope. Bradley had overcome his fear to a certain extent, but he kept his mind on his trusty gun. He was vaguely uneasy, expectant, not knowing what was coming next.

Night came quickly in the foothills as Bradley sat on the flat boulder within sight of his destination. Already objects were being blotted from sight by the dense blackness settling over the gulch. The time had arrived when he should be moving forward, and with a grunt he slid off the rock, stretched his aching limbs and took a step forward. Before he could take another, at his very elbow somebody said: "You are prompt, Bradley, and as you could easily lose your way in this darkness I will guide you to the cabin."

Bradley wheeled in his tracks and his mind slid to the forty-five, but the voice interrupted. "Never mind that—you're not

in any present danger. It is only I, the Loco Man. Now I'll come close enough for you to see me even in the darkness, and you can then follow me. Come," and Bradley could tell it was the stranger who had entered Daly's store the evening before.

"I don't understand what you want with me," he growled, as he tagged along at the heels of the stranger, "but I'm goin' with you just the same. You advised me not to try any crooked stuff, an' I'm sayin' the same to you. I've got a pretty quick finger an' my gun's got a hair-trigger; besides, I can shoot pretty straight in the dark."

The Loco Man chuckled. "Forget it, Bradley," he said. "I understand your position and the questions in your mind. For your benefit I will say I never hurt anybody in my life to my knowledge."

By the time they arrived at the cabin Bradley was breathing hard, but the stranger had not minded the climb. Throwing open the door, he stepped inside, striking a match and applying it to the lamp on a table at one side of the little room. Bradley's eyes becoming accustomed to the light, he surveyed the place with much interest. The cabin contained a few articles of crude furniture and nothing else but what might adorn the house of any miner.

The Loco Man closed the door and, turning to his visitor, said: "Sit down, Bradley," indicating a crude chair. "Before showing you something that will surprise you I want to relate a little story. The men at Last Chance Camp wouldn't believe it if I told them, for they think I'm crazy. But you will, I know, for you are different from them.

"Bradley, three years ago I came West—for no apparent reason. I wandered here, there, everywhere, working at odd jobs and anything that offered to make a living. When I arrived at this place it rather appealed to me; I didn't know why, but I do now. I tried my hand at placer mining, panning the sands of the little creeks just as you are doing now. In fact, I did that until chance led me to this place. I took possession of it immediately, that being in early summer, and during my leisure time I planted a few vegetables. Then I decided to dig a small cellar under the lean-to kitchen to stow some of them for the winter. I began digging, and then came the big discovery. Bradley, my home stands over the richest pocket of gold that was ever found here!"

Bradley's lids narrowed and his eyes flashed greedily as he leaned forward and rested his long arms on the table. He licked his dry lips and queried: "An' you haven't told any one about this?"

"I have not, but what if I had?" replied the stranger. "Nobody would have believed it, for remember, I'm the Loco Man."

"Then why did you pick me out?" asked Bradley. "You don't know anything about me, an' maybe I will not believe it, either."

The Loco Man smiled. "You will when I show you," he said. "I've been watching you for some time in your struggle to eke out a living from the sands of Crooked Creek. True, there may be many working just as hard, but there are other reasons why I selected you which I will explain later. We will now take a look at the pocket. I can't say how large it is, but I know I've but touched it as yet. There is enough gold in sight now to make several rich. Why, the walls of the shaft are so studded with nuggets that by candlelight they look like a star-studded sky. But come, I'll show you. The shaft is under the kitchen, entered by a trapdoor in the floor. You go ahead and I'll fasten the front door and bring the lamp."

Suiting action to his words, the Loco Man dropped a heavy bar of wood across the door as Bradley started on his way to the kitchen. When he stepped through the middle doorway, the earth seemed to open up and swallow him. With a shriek he plunged from sight into the mouth of a black pit. Wildly the falling man grasped at the edges of the opening as he dropped into space, but they were jerked from his hands and he went down, down, coming to a stop on a pile of loose dirt some twelve or fifteen feet below the floor.

The stranger, leaning over the edge of the pit, held the lamp high above his head and called out: "Are you hurt, Bradley?"

A stream of profanity greeted his ears.

"No, I'm not hurt, no thanks to you," came from the bottom of the pit, "but what the devil did you leave that hole open for? Did you want to kill me? An' how am I goin' to get out of this place—I can't climb these here walls an' it's too much like bein' buried alive to stay down here very long."

"I'm glad you're not hurt, Bradley. But before I drop a rope ladder down to you, light the candle and take a look around you. You will forget the accident when you do. You are surrounded by a perfect wall of gold. Within your reach is wealth untold."

Bradley scratched a match on the sole of his shoe and applied it to the candle. Holding it above his head he surveyed the walls of the shaft. The Loco Man had told the truth; it was there, gold beyond estimate. Yet Bradley felt a vague uneasiness. Somehow he couldn't banish from his mind the thought that there was something sinister yet to come. What it was he couldn't even guess, but still the premonition haunted him.

Looking upward, he saw the stranger's face outlined in the opening. He had seen it somewhere before, but when and where he could not remember. Was the man mad, and had he lured him here to murder him? If so, why? Perhaps he had best do as Daly said, and humor him; so he called out: "It surely is wonderful. You was in luck when you moved here an' started your cellar. I sure am glad you brought me here, an' I ain't sore because I fell down here. But if you'll drop that rope ladder, I'll come up an' we'll plan how to get the gold out quick an' get away from this dead place."

The Loco Man laughed. "Not just yet, Bradley," he said. "First you must toss that big gun of yours up here on the floor—I'm trusting nobody. Be quick about it, too!"

Bradley hesitated. "How do I know but what you'll shoot me?" he blurted out. "If I throw my gun up how do I know but you'll turn it upon me down here in this hole? I want to play square, an' I hope you do, too. How about me just throwin' up the cartridges—that would be fair, wouldn't it?"

"Very well," replied the Loco Man. "That will be all right with me."

Bradley removed the shells from his gun and threw them out of the pit. The Loco Man picked them up and placed them in his pocket, after which he calmly seated himself at the edge of the opening and said: "Bradley, in a sense I am surprised at you. You are now entirely in my hands. It doesn't seem possible you would deliberately walk into a trap like you have tonight. Was it because you were afraid, or did you suspect I had found a gold mine, and you decided to risk all in an effort to get some easy money? I have no doubt you would commit murder to get it, for a man who would deliberately rob another upon a bed of affliction would slay when a fortune was in sight, if he had the chance, and thought he could get away with it. Once you stole a sick man's all, but this time it's different."

Bradley glared up through the candle-lighted shaft, open-mouthed and wondering. He had begun to catch the drift of the stranger's words. Surely this man could not know what had happened in his life to make him a wanderer upon the face of the earth and a fugitive from justice? He would try to bluff the stranger. "I wouldn't try to kill you, an' I'd be glad to hear you call me pard—I'd sure treat you right."

The Loco Man laughed. "I'm very glad to hear you say you have reformed, but I can't believe it. I know that people sometimes do, but this is once I'm satisfied that such is not the case. You have been trying to remember when you had seen me before ever since you saw me at Daly's store last night, haven't you?

"Do you remember the man who was stricken with the fever back in Indiana, just when his drove of hogs were ready for the market? Do you remember he expected them to pay the remainder of his wife's funeral expenses, she having died with the fever, and to make the first payment on the little hill farm he had bought for a home? Do you remember also how hard he had worked, how he had saved, how he had managed to get them, and to get them ready? And how a supposed friend had proposed to carry on the transaction for the

sick man? And last, do you remember how he took charge of the shipment, sold them, pocketed the receipts and then disappeared? Dan Bradley, do you remember all this?"

The man in the shaft staggered against the wall. "My God, I know you now!" he gasped. "You are Ted Alexander!" Then suddenly the true coward in him began to assert itself—he began to whimper. "But you aren't goin' to kill me, are you, Ted? Forgive me, Ted, an' I'll work for you day an' night."

Again the Loco Man laughed. "Bradley, I have searched for you for years. Do you think that now since I've found you I shall forswear my vengeance? No, your doom is sealed. I have removed all the gold I shall need in my life, be it long or short. This shaft shall be your tomb, *for I'm going to bury you alive!*"

Bradley's knees trembled under him. His breath came in short gasps; he tried to call out, but his tongue clove to the dry roof of his mouth, and all he could do was to utter feeble moans and raise his hands supplicatingly to the man on the floor above. For a moment the Loco Man surveyed the picture of abject misery in the feeble glow of the candle below him. Then he spoke:

"Bradley, after all, fate has been kind to me. It has showed me the way, and showered fortune upon me after a time of suffering. It has led me to the wretch and placed him in my power, who, unknowingly, led me to it. No, Bradley, I shall not kill you, but let you live to suffer the pangs of a guilty conscience, if you have one, which is far better. I shall now drop a rope ladder down the shaft and then leave the cabin, returning in half an hour. But remember, I shall be near and your movements will be watched. When tomorrow's sun rises, if it finds you in Last Chance Camp I might change my mind. Do you understand.

Down at the bottom of the shaft the wreck of a man slowly nodded his head, his supplicating hands still reached upward. And throwing down the rope ladder, the Loco Man opened the door of the cabin, and with a strange satisfied smile on his face strolled off into the night.

A MILLINERY BURGLAR

POLICE were baffled by the theft of $50,000 worth of millinery from the Eisenrath Millinery Co., in the last two years, until a detective observed girls wearing new hats at the rate of one for every day of the year. Two weeks' work on the trail brightened by toques, turbans, sailors and leghorns brought a solution of the mystery. Several girls were arrested, among them a number of milliners, and confessions were obtained.

According to the police, Joseph Tutinsky, Harry Sauralek and Abe Isaac were the chief "fences" through whom the stolen millinery was disposed of. Samuel Brash, who conducts a little millinery store; Max Derman and Irwin Saussman are also under charges. Isaac made a confession, saying he had bestowed the choicest hats upon his "girl," and a search of her apartments brought forth sixty-nine costly creations.

"I didn't care much for Isaac," she said, "but I do like hats."

Sauralek also had a sweetheart and several of the hats were found in her room. He was employed as a stock boy in the Eisenrath establishment at $20 a week, but he was able to rent a costly car every week and gave the girl a $1,000 engagement ring. Another man under arrest got $16 a week as a porter, but it was found he had four bank accounts and rented a safe deposit box which is yet to be examined.

The House on Lincoln Road

By JACK J. GOTTLIEB and ELMER YASPAN

CHAPTER ONE

GORDON A. SMUDLEY, the new Commissioner of Public Safety, was cleaning up the city.

That was a significant thing. The city had long needed a cleaning up, but had remained as it was pending the arrival of a man of force and action. And Smudley was just such a man.

He closed all the saloons—shut them up tight, like drums. He reinforced the police department. He closed the gambling dens, and other places of vice. He raided here, there, everywhere, big and small. No hive of iniquity escaped pillaging by his agents. He had all the infamous characters rounded up and chased out of the city.

And still not satisfied, he called in the Chief of Police and told him this:

"While we're doing it, Reems, it would be best to do it thoroughly. I have reference to the many unsolved crimes the old gang fell down on while in office. Get them cleared up—some of them, anyway! Spare neither might, main, men nor money! We are going to show the public and the lawbreakers the meaning of the word 'law!'"

Heart and soul Chief of Police Reems was with the new Commissioner in this dashing move to jam law and order down the throats of the malefactors. Accordingly he wasted no time in calling Berney Halls.

In the Chief's opinion, Lietenant of Detectives Berney Halls was the most sagacious, the most fearless, the most ingenious man on the force. Reliable, old in experience though young in years—that further described him. To him the Chief said:

"Listen, Berney. I've just dug up that Roth jewel robbery case from the records. Remember? That affair Jimmy Thames worked on for half a year, when you were in Chicago after those dope men. I am going to give you a try at it now. Yes, yes; I know—it's a year old now, and shelved; but I'm going to see what you can do with it, anyway.

"Of course it's a cinch we'll never recover the Roth jewel; but if we ever land the crooks that got away with it, what a mark it would be for the Department! You know whom we suspected: 'Gentleman Harry' Rothschild and 'White' Lyonson—two of the sharpest crooks in the country. We couldn't prove anything on them, so we had to let them go; but it sure smacked of their work. They're over in the big town now.

"Well, Berney, what do you say? If you think it's useless, don't tackle it."

Berney Halls's jaw set. "Nothing that offers the least chance of tracking down criminals is useless, Chief," he replied. "I'm on."

"That's the spirit! Here are the records. You can brush up on the case. And you have my full permission to go about it any way you want. The whole Department's at your service. Now go to work!"

So Lieutenant of Detectives Berney Halls started work on the Roth jewel robbery case.

CHAPTER TWO

TO Windy Dan McNamara's place, a hang-out for thieves and gangsters situated in the big city's underworld, came "Philadelphia Red" Loevner.

His reputation had preceded him. On the wings of the wind there had come to the

ears of those who frequented Windy Dan's little whisperings and tales of this extraordinary character's exploits, of his prowess as a gunman of the worst type.

It was rumored that Philadelphia Red Loevner feared neither man nor devil. He had participated in the most daring escapades; was known to be sharp as the fox; tigerish in his ferociousness; quick, nimble and silent as the cat. Respected, too, as much as he was feared.

That was rumor. They didn't go very far, these little whisperings; just breathed their way through the portals of Windy McNamara's—and stopped.

He wasn't known by sight, so his coming went unnoticed. One evening he sauntered over to the bar and ordered a drink. He gulped it down, then smiled faintly to McNamara. He took off his hat to wipe his brow, and Windy Dan saw that he had a shock of reddish brown hair. It was then that a light broke across the proprietor's face.

"You're Red Loevner from Philly, ain't you?" he asked.

Loevner nodded. He looked around.

"I like your burg," he said. "Never been here before. Funny, ain't it? I've been in almost every peanut town on the map, but never here."

McNamara proferred his hand. "Glad to know you, Red. You'll like this place. There ain't so many reformers here. Intend to stay?"

"Maybe. The cops kicked me out o' Philly. There's plenty stove-hats there. There's a reform wave on, so they asked me to git. That's why I'm here."

He got another drink, said "See you later," then strolled out. A half-hour later he returned. McNamara had gotten rid of his apron, and sat at a table. Red Loevner edged over to him.

"I like this burg, and I think I'm gonna stay. But I'm dead broke. Maybe you can lend me some jack?"

Windy Dan studied the toe of his boot for a moment.

"I'll lend you a hundred, Red," he finally acquiesced, "providin'——"

"Providin' what?"

"Well, I've a little job——"

Philadelphia Red suddenly leaned forward and grasped the mentor of crime by the sleeve.

"There's some one in back of me showin' a lot of interest in us," he murmured. "Take it easy. Know him?"

A weak smile broke across the other's fat face.

"Oh, him? Yes, I do. He'll all right. That's Russ Reynolds. He's a big gun, same as you. How'd you know he was watchin' us? You didn't look around."

"Funny way I have. I don't have to see things to know things."

"So I've heard tell. Wanta meet him? Yo-ah, Russ; c'mere."

A moment later the gunman from Philadelphia looked up at a giant of a man, powerfully built. He had the loose mouth of the thief, and the shifty mistrustful eyes and cruel lines imprinted on his face. This was Russ Reynolds, known to the police by a score of aliases, partner in many thieveries and hold-ups, a man who had spent half his life in prison.

"Russ," said Windy Dan, "shake hands with Philadelphia Red Loevner."

Loevner laid his hand in a massive paw. The owner of it spoke:

"So you're the fellow, eh? I've heard a lot about you. How are tricks in Philly?"

"Plumb absent. There ain't none. I left partly because o' that, but mostly 'cause I was asked to—and not perlitely."

He grinned thickly, and Russ Reynolds smiled. So did Windy Dan.

"Now let's get down to it," said the latter.

With his suggestion they went into an inner room. It was tiny and almost bare, but there were three chairs, and there was a table. Windy keyed the door.

"Russ is in on this job," McNamara explained to Philadelphia Red, when they had seated themselves. "It takes two to swing it—two good men. And if any one can turn it you fellows can.

"Russ knows all about it. He wanted to get at it himself, but I've held him off because it needed another hand. It may

turn out to be a strong-arm job, y' see. And there's a lot in it, if pulled right.

"There's a house on Lincoln Road, out in the suburbs, that's just waitin' to be cleaned out. A widow by the name of Clainton and her daughter live there. I've had it scouted. The on'y men livin' in the house is one of them English man-servants and a chauffeur. Besides there's a maid.

"There's no other people livin' but those five—Mrs. Clainton, Miss Clainton, chaffeur, maid, and the English boy with the sideboards. If yer know anything about latch and window alarms, it's the easiest thing in the world to break in quietly. And they've got val'yables in that house worth several fortunes.

"That's the outline of it. If you're on, Red, we'll give yer details and arrangements. What say?"

Loevner pondered. Fully aware of the potency of the old maxim that warned him to look before he leaped, he gazed from one eager face to the other.

"How about the hundred?" he asked.

"If you're in on this it's yours—as first payment. There will be more later, of course—much more."

He dabbed his hand into his pocket and drew forth a roll of money. Red Loevner made as though he didn't see it. But slowly he nodded.

"All right; but it's understood I get one-third of what the swag brings us."

"Sure—sure. Now listen!" said McNamara.

And in that little room situated somewhere in the rear of Windy Dan's place these three put their heads together and talked and schemed in whispering tones.

CHAPTER THREE

IT was Saturday night.

A high-powered car stopped somewhere on Lincoln Road and two tall men got out. The bigger of the two muttered some instructions to the driver, who remained at the wheel. Then the two walked—grilled, rather—along the macadamized road.

"Got the stuff with you?" asked one.

"Yep," the other returned.

"How 'bout a gat?"

"Always carry one," smilingly.

"Don't look as though we'll need any such thing tonight, though. This is the servants' night off, and the folks will be steppin' out. But you never can tell."

In the gray of the night (it was sort of murky) the Clainton house limned up. The bigger of the two, who was Russ Reynolds, told Red to walk down a way slowly, while he'd reconnoiter. He slipped away then toward a road that led to the rear of the house. About ten minutes later he returned.

"Everything looks jake. There's a light in the house, but I think it's in the hallway. No one's home, it seems. Let's go, Red."

The dim, deserted road lost them. Like shadows, with a sidling ease that could have come only of experience, they moved up to the house. There was a light there; where it couldn't have been told; but it was there. The two crouched for a while and listened.

They went forward again. Hugging the rock of the wall, Russ Reynolds in the lead, they inched their way to a sort of tiny balustrade that formed a partition to the windowed side of the house. It was high, but Russ Reynolds easily caught hold and swung his gigantic form up on it. Once there he crouched low.

"Come on, Red. Easy, now."

Red Loevner was lithe. A moment later he was with Reynolds, bending low. In a whisper the big crook told him:

"We've got to work in this position, Red. Don't stan' up. Got a jimmy?"

"Here it is."

"Keep a lookout. I'll work."

Ten minutes later there was a muffled snap, and the big French window moved. Russ Reynolds pushed it in. They listened. It was dark and noiseless.

"No one here. Get a grip on your gat, Red. Don't step on the panel."

The big window, heavily curtained, shut out the dim light of outside night as Red Loevner moved it to. The dark was thick about them. Tremulous silence, too. The short breathing of both of them was audi-

ble to each other. Immobile for a time they waited—listened.

Something clicked in Reynolds's hand. An arc of light flew to the wall. They inspected the room they'd entered. It was big and magnificently furnished. Reynolds cast the light along the four walls, then clicked it out.

"The wall-safe with the val'ables ain't in this chamber," he whispered to Red. "We've got to get down the entry—to the second door on the left. It's in that room—the library."

The gleam of yellow light shot out again. It rested on a closed door.

Noiseless as gliding cats they moved to it. Red Loevner opened it and peeped out. The light that had in some way come out to them on the outside shone in the hall. It was a dim, sickly blue. He gripped his weapon in his pocket and tiptoed down the hall. The breathing of Reynolds behind was audible to him. Past one door, at which he stopped to listen—to the next.

The library door was slightly ajar. It was black within. A lethargic warmth swam against their faces as they entered. Again Reynolds clicked on the search-light; he slowly allowed the saffron gleam to pass around the room.

It was spacious, luxurant, like the first—even more so. The glittering fixtures were marvelous works of art. The furniture was magnificent in its individuality. Splendid was the sheen of the thick rug. Green portieres shimmered before the high, separate windows.

But Red Loevner and Reynolds paid attention to none of these. The yellow arc did not stop at them; rather, it sought out a small family portrait that hung on the wall. The picture did not seem to belong there; it was as though it had been put there with a purpose other than for decoration. The propriety of it was lacking.

Reynolds's professional eye was quick to note it. A housebreaker by specialty, such a thing as incongruity of objects did not escape him. Wall-safes in rich homes were known to him in all their phases by experience.

"If that's not it," he murmured gruffly in Leovner's ear, "then I miss my guess. Stan' by the door, Red. If you hear a noise don't talk, just hiss."

Searchlight held steadily on that portrait, he advanced. But suddenly the huge bulk of him stiffened in its tracks. His light snapped out. He heard the sibilant noise that Red made. For there had come to his ears shrill, yet so far off that it was indistinct, a long drawn-out whistle—a tocsin of danger at hand—a signal from the driver of their car that could mean but one thing.

He waited another second—no more. It came again, poignant, quivering with the breath of warning. It meant that some one was entering the house!

Then there came a noise as of a key rattling in a lock. He turned to sense Red's taut body beside him. In his ear there came Red's fast words:

"Quick—behind the curtains!"

They did not stumble. Cool even in their haste they disappeared behind separate portieres. The curtains stopped quivering barely in time, too. There sounded voices in the hallway—a man's and a girl's—laughing voices; and then a blazing light flooded the library.

Red Loevner had to flatten himself against the window, for the curtains gave him meagre room; he dared not risk a part of his body bulging out. He could not see into the room; to peep out would be unwise; but he could very plainly hear the laughing voices—hear what they said. They were exchanging witticisms, pleasantries. Red gathered that they had just come home from the opera, which they'd walked out upon; but the poorness of the show seemed not to have dampened their spirits.

"Suppose, Arthur, I get some tea ready,"

"Do," returned the man. "A cup or two would suit me admirably."

"The maid isn't here, so I'll get it myself. Shall I serve it in the library?"

"If you so wish. Immaterial to me."

"All right, Arthur," laughed the girl. And Red Loevner heard her go out; heard the man clamp down on a sofa, and heard only his own breathing interrupt the stillness.

(*Concluded in the next issue.*)

An Inside Job

By J. M. SCANLAND

"THIS looks like an inside job," suggested Detective Lees to his assistant, Dan Coffee, after they had examined the room in the Dixon apartment house. "Some one in this house got that $5,000."

"It looks that way on the surface," replied Coffee slowly.

"It is always the better plan to follow the plainest and most logical conclusions rather than to hunt for clues," said Lees in a tone indicating knowledge gained from long experience.

"There are only the butler, Owen Thorne, and the house maid, Mary Hinman. Both say that they were out last night until very late, and we found nothing in their rooms."

"That is what they say," replied Lees in a significant tone. "The servants are always out when a house is robbed. They mentioned where they were. Let's check up on their alibis later on. If they lied we can nail them."

"All right, Lees," replied Coffee in a tone indicating doubt. "Beat it!"

The apartment-house where the robbery had occurred was a one-story double structure. In one of the flats lived John Dixon and his wife; the other was occupied by Thomas Lynde and his wife. Dixon was a well-to-do merchant, and Lynde claimed to be a jeweler, but his real business was that of a gambler. They kept only one servant, Jennie Jenkins.

As the officers had concluded their theories Dixon and his wife again came into the room.

"You are sure that you had that amount of money in that trunk?" asked Lees.

"As sure as I am that I live!" replied Dixon. "That is, there was nearly that amount. My wife took out, I believe, $200 the other day."

"Yes; I wanted a new dress," replied Mrs. Dixon with a smile.

"Did you lock your trunk?"

"Why, certainly! Do you think I would be goose enough to leave it unlocked?"

"Sometimes people do such things," replied the officer smiling. "What time did you go out?" continued Lees.

"It was about half-past seven," replied Dixon. "We went to Mr. Beard's and stayed about two hours. On entering our room I saw that a chair had been overturned, and became suspicious."

"And then I looked at my trunk and saw that it was unlocked," interrupted Mrs. Dixon.

"Are you sure that you locked it when you went out?"

"I have just told you that," snapped Mrs. Dixon.

"Have you the key?" asked the officer, thinking that perhaps she had left it in the lock.

"I have," replied Mrs. Dixon, taking it from her purse.

"Were the servants at home when you returned?"

"No. That is, Mary came in shortly after I called to her; but Thorne did not come for about an hour. I scolded both of them for leaving the house when we were out," replied the woman.

"Has either one of them a key to your room?"

"No; I have that," replied Dixon, "and locked the door when he went out."

The officers moved toward the door. They examined the lock and tried the key.

"It works all right; just the same as it did

when the robbery took place!" exclaimed Dixon, showing impatience, "and just the same as when he came in," he added.

The officers again examined the lock on the trunk. Mrs. Dixon locked and unlocked it. No trace of injury was shown.

"False keys were used to enter the room and to open the trunk," exclaimed Detective Lees. "If they were both locked when you went out," he added.

"We are positive that both the trunk and the door were locked when we left. So false keys must certainly have been used!" exclaimed Mrs. Dixon, half-accusingly, and motioning her head in the direction of the apartment opposite.

The officers exchanged glances.

"Do your neighbors visit you often?" asked Lees.

"They do come in here often—too often—but I do not return their calls," answered Mrs. Dixon.

"Were they out last night?"

"They came over shortly after the robbery, for they heard me talking to Mary in the hall. They had on their things, as if they had been out."

There was silence for a moment, when the woman startled the officers by suddenly asking: "Can a jeweler make a false key?"

"He can for a watch," replied Lees, looking straight into the woman's eyes. "What do you mean by that question?"

"Oh, nothing! I do not mean to insinuate anything, but——"

"You suspect your neighbor," interrupted the detective.

The woman did not answer, but shrugged her shoulders.

"What did she or her husband say when you told them of the robbery?"

"They were greatly surprised, or pretended to be. She asked a thosand questions, and said it must be the servants."

The detectives searched the rooms of the servants, and crossed over to the apartment of the Lyndes.

"You can search my rooms!" exclaimed Lynde when the officers introduced themselves and intimated the object of their visit.

"Yes; search everywhere—everything in the rooms!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynde, her eyes flashing in indignation. "Does that woman across the way dare to insinuate anything against us?"

"No," replied Detective Lees, "but it is our duty in such a case to make a thorough search the premises. The innocent will not suffer, and cannot reasonably object."

"Certainly not! But it is mean in that woman to——"

"She has not accused you," interrupted Coffee.

"What time did you go out last night?" asked Lees.

"About half-past seven," replied the woman.

"Did your maid stay at home while you were out?"

"Certainly she did! I told her to do so; and I know she did," replied the woman with emphasis.

The officers bowed and went out.

They then visited the houses where Dixon's servants said they had gone. In a short time they learned that Mary Hinman had told the truth, but that Thorne had not.

"We must question him again," said Lees grimly.

The Lyndes had no objection to another search.

The officers explored the storeroom, which was crammed with old papers, trunks, clothes and other cast-off articles. In a corner they saw an odd-looking camphor wood trunk.

"This is our last chance—we have turned up everything else!" exclaimed Lees as he lifted the lid and began to throw out the contents. Coffee picked up each article and shook it to see that nothing escaped them.

"The devil!" shouted Lees as he jumped up with a package in his hand.

"It looks like something else!" exclaimed Coffee. Lees uncovered the package and exposed a large bunch of bank bills.

"Well, what did you find?" asked Mrs. Lynde in a tone of derision as the officers re-entered the living-room.

"We've got the missing roll of bills," replied Lees. "Found 'em in the comphor trunk."

"That is an infamous falsehood!" ex-

claimed Lynde, his face turning white, as he glared at the accusing officer.

"The money was found on your premises, and this presupposes guilt on the part of the occupants," retorted the detective.

"We never use that storeroom. That is, our maid stows things, but I never enter it!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynde.

"Just $4,000," said Lees as he counted the bills. "The amount taken was $4,800; you have, therefore, $800."

"That is infamous!" shouted Lynde.

"Shut up!" roared Lees. "You are pinched!"

The woman protested and Lynde threatened; the officers led their prisoners away.

"We are much obliged for the excellent service you gentlemen performed," said Mrs. Dixon effusively. "I just knew they did it, but we shall not make any charge against them."

"You must appear as witnesses or be prosecuted. A crime has been committed. Finding the money does not acquit the criminal. We are not collecting agents," said Lees.

So the Dixons went to Headquarters with the detectives.

Lynde and his wife were charged with the robbery. The reputation of the man as a gambler was against him, and finding the money in his apartment seemed conclusive evidence of their guilt. On this circumstantial evidence they were convicted.

"They may be guilty," said Lees to his partner, "but that butler lied and I'm suspicious of him. I'm going to watch that bird and it wouldn't do any harm if you kept an eye on the maid."

With this understanding the detectives began to shadow the two servants.

In a short time Mary Hinman blossomed out in new and flashy dresses and was seen with Thorne at the cabarets. Coffee soon learned that Thorne had bought the dresses for Mary. They were arrested on suspicion.

Under a severe application of the "Third Degree" the girl broke down and admitted that Thorne had stolen the money. "He put it in the Lyndes' storeroom," she sobbed, "for he was afraid that his room would be searched."

"It was an inside job, all right, Lees," said Coffee, when they had put their prisoners in jail and the Lyndes were released.

MAN CONCEALED IN A CART

BUSINESS rivalry in Harlem's "Little Italy" resulted in the fatal shooting of Joseph Cuttitta, thirty-three years of age.

Cuttitta, an agent for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, was shot by a hidden assassin as he passed 423 East Seventeenth street on his way to business. The slayer, concealed in a cart of the Department of Street Cleaning, which was drawn up at the curb, pumped three bullets from an automatic pistol at Cuttitta, one of which struck him in the forehead, killing him instantly. As Cuttitta fell the murderer jumped from the wagon, fled through the hallway of the Seventeenth street building and disappeared over a fence.

Two men are said to have participated in the attack, although only one fired. At the first shot, however, witnesses say the second man ran from behind the wagon toward Cuttitta with a pistol in his hand. He withheld his fire, however, when he saw Cuttitta fall.

The shooting is said to have been instigated by a rival who was envious of Cuttitta's success among the residents of "Little Italy."

Vanderdecken's Cat

By JACK BECHDOLT

IT was the Vanderdecken case that got Tom Kearney his start toward recognition and promotion, and should you visit his house, Kearney will insist on showing you Diablo, Vanderdecken's cat.

Tom Kearney, young, red-haired and handsome, strolled his beat on Madison avenue at about twilight of a fine June evening.

Standing in the doorway of his shop he beheld his friend and counselor, Cornelius Vanderdecken, the dealer in antiques.

Patrolman Kearney flourished his nightstick in greeting and quickened his step to the time of day, as they say.

Cornelius Vanderdecken's shop was a curiosity in itself. For twenty-five years Vanderdecken's sign had swung from over its door advertising his business, which was dealing in objects of art, old furniture, old pewter, early American glass, Chinese porcelain and various odds and ends of earlier civilizations that are coveted by collectors.

Vanderdecken owned the house and the land it stood upon.

The sturdy Hollander refused to sell or build a modern profit-paying edifice.

His nephew, Karl Lent, who was rated among the captains of Wall Street, tried to convince his uncle that the property should be put to paying better dividends, but Vanderdecken shook his head at all such arguments.

"No," he would say, "the house is good enough for me. Twenty-five years I have lived therein. It is my shop and my home. I make a good living by it. I like it so!"

Vanderdecken was a massive six-footer. His white head was bare as he leaned in the little doorway of the shop puffing an after-dinner pipe, with his cat Diablo perched on a high stool beside him. There was a rumor current that the cat was as old as its master. Of course this was absurd. The cat was probably ten years old—a long time as New York cat history goes.

It was a huge, jet black beast. Its great yellow eyes closed to thin slits as Vanderdecker's big hand touched its fur lightly.

"Good-evening to you both, gentlemen," said Patrolman Kearney lightly, his white teeth flashing in a smile.

Vanderdecken nodded. The black cat's eyes opened for a moment and narrowed again in dreamy contentment.

"They do say you're brothers, the pair of you," Kearney grinned. "For one, I believe it. I never see the one without the other near by."

"It is so," Vanderdecken smiled placidly. "But not brothers—partners. Diablo has the brains—I furnish the capital."

"Do you say so, indeed! And you would be attributing to a mere dumb creature more brains than a man, Mr. Vanderdecken?"

"Some animals know more than men, Tom, my friend. Some dogs, yes. A horse or two are smart, perhaps. The elephant, certainly; and the cat—ah, the cat knows most of all.. Yet he can't pull a wagon."

"Well, there's rats," suggested Kearney.

"Yes, but there are cats like Diablo who will not soil their paws with a rat! And yet, look you, a cat does not want for material comforts. Through the ages, since man built him a house or hole to dwell in, the cat has curled up by the fire. The cat has had his bit of meat, his sup of milk. Now how would you say such a thing comes about, my friend?"

Tom Kearney shook his head slowly.

"They're a bunch of grafters—all cats," he agreed.

"Not grafters, any more than man is a grafter because he takes what he needs to eat and wear from the earth God put him on. No, but the cat is wise; the cat lives by his wits. The cat, Tom Kearney, uses nothing but his brain!"

Vanderdecken's cat opened its yellow eyes wide and arched its big back, beginning to purr.

"Look!" cried the antique dealer; "he knows what we say!"

"He's the smart one," Kearney agreed.

"When you are as smart as my cat, Tom Kearney," Vanderdecken observed imperturbably, "you will be a wise man indeed."

"Ah, well, I'm young. Let me hope!" Kearney grinned, and was on his way with a farewell flourish of his night-stick.

This was at 8.30 o'clock.

A church clock was just striking the half-hour.

At nine o'clock Tom Kearney, turning back in his rounds, passed Vanderdecken's door a second time.

The shop door stood open as it always did until the dealer retired for the night to his rooms in the second story of the old house.

Vanderdecken was seated at his desk which was set toward the rear of the shop, and lighted by a lamp that cast most of its direct rays upon the papers before him, reflecting indirectly on his face and the face of the man who was talking with him.

Kearney knew the man. It was Karl Lent, the dealer's nephew, the man of wealth and power, and reputed to be influential with the police commissioner.

"And how's the cat now?" Kearney called from the doorway.

"Still the smartest man of the lot of us," Vanderdecken answered with his chuckle.

Lent glanced up and greeted the patrolman by name.

Tom gave him a good-evening and went on about his duty.

Patrolman Kearney neared the little shop for a third time not long after ten had struck.

Now he was giving more attention to the street and the property he protected, for it was long after dark, and his responsibilities were heavier. He tried the doors of shops, scanned the dark shadows for lurking, suspicious persons and took note of the few vehicles that passed up or down or across the long, silent street.

A light still came from Vanderdecken's open door, and in that light Tom Kearney saw Vanderdecken's cat behaving strangely.

The big black beast was half way across the pavement. It's back was arched. Its enormous tail was bushed out. Its yellow eyes were fixed on the interior of Vanderdecken's little shop; the black ears flattened close to its head and the mouth opened in a snarl.

"Hello!" Tom Kearney exclaimed, quickening his step. He had never seen Diablo act like this before.

Tom's first glance was into Vanderdecken's thick-lensed spectacles.

"So!" came the greeting in Vanderdecken's familiar guttural. "It's you, Tom Kearney?"

"Everything all right?"

"Why not, my friend?"

Tom hesitated, feeling a little foolish.

"Your cat is out here acting like he saw a banshee," he explained.

"Ah, that cat! He sees visions—yes? Put him in, will you, Tom?"

The cat permitted Tom to pick it up and fetch it into the shop, though it struggled as they entered.

"I'll have to close this door or he'll run out again," Tom explained, suiting the action to the word. "Now what the devil has got into the beast?"

The cat's back was arched again, and it regarded its master with blazing yellow eyes, retreating into a corner and hissing angrily.

Vanderdecken's big body stirred impatiently in his chair at the rear of the shop. "That cat is foolish in the head," he murmured. "Well, it is late—yes? After ten? We must go to bed then. My nephew, Mr. Lent, he went home long ago. Why should I waste hours over these accounts?"

"I'll be on my way, too," Tom agreed.

"Close the door as you go out, then. It is a spring lock."

Tom saw Vanderdecken lower his head, bending forward as if to peer more closely at the papers before him.

"Good-night," said Tom.

The dealer did not answer.

Tom opened the door just enough to slip through, lest Vanderdecken's cat dart out again.

He paused at the shop window to glance back, and could see Vanderdecken dimly at the rear of the shop bent over his desk.

The cat had leaped atop an old highboy. Its back was still arched, its tail lashing angrily, mouth opened to spit, its yellow eyes blazing.

"Huh!" Tom Kearney snorted; "that cat's so smart its gone mad from using its brain!"

When Patrolman Kearney got to the pillar signal-box half an hour later the light was flashing. Over the telephone he was told that Cornelius Vanderdecken was dead —murdered—struck down by a knife in his own house.

Vanderdecken's own servant, a middle-aged woman, coming home late had found her master's body at the foot of the staircase leading to the second story.

Tom Kearney sprinted back to the antique shop.

A police car stood at the curb, and inside he found Captain Riley of the Detective Bureau and as assistant.

Vanderdecken's body had just been laid on his bed upstairs. Tom looked on it with horror and grief, for he had been fond of Vanderdecken.

Karl Lent, the dead man's nephew, arrived a few minutes after Tom, and Captain Riley began questioning him.

The knife that had killed Vanderdecken lay on the table behind which Riley was seated. It was an old dagger, one of the stock-in-trade of the shop. Its blade was red with drying blood. It had been picked up close beside the dealer's body.

"I called to see my uncle as I often do after dinner," Lent explained. "I think I dropped into the shop at about a quarter of nine. I recollect Patrolman Kearney stopping at the door a little later and saying something about the cat, and my uncle answering——"

"That's true enough," Tom exclaimed.

"My uncle and I talked of nothing that could have any possible bearing on this tragedy," Lent continued. "It was just a friendly visit—a chat. I don't think I stayed more than three-quarters of an hour. It was between twenty-five after nine and the half-hour when I glanced at my watch just after leaving him."

"Did you happen to notice the cat?" Tom questioned as Lent concluded.

"The cat!" Lent gave him a curious glance and the others stared. "No, I don't remember seeing it. Why?"

"I only wondered if maybe it was acting funny at that time," Tom murmured, blushing at his presumption in taking part in Captain Riley's investigation.

Riley made a few notes of Lent's story and thanked him. There was a general disposition to treat Karl Lent well, for his friendship at Headquarters was generally known.

"Now, Patrolman," Riley said briskly, "what do you know?"

Tom Kearney told his story.

The maid was examined. She had spent the evening with a friend, a statement easily verified. When she returned at just about half-past ten the shop was undisturbed, the outer door locked properly and windows closed. Unsuspecting, she took a lamp that awaited her and started to go to bed. At the foot of the stairs she found Vanderdecken's body.

There was no more testimony to take.

An examination of the shop found the windows locked, the rear door properly barred from within, everything as it should be. Vanderdecken's money, a small amount in cash, was untouched and his papers and possessions intact.

"Well, we don't know much, for a fact," Captain Riley declared glumly. "We know that Vanderdecken is dead and we know he was killed some time between ten and half after. Mr. Lent is accounted for by his own story and also by Tom Kearney's conversation with Vanderdecken. Tom

must have been the last to see the old man alive. Now he's dead. It's one of those hard, simple facts you've got to wonder about, that's all. Somebody killed him, but he didn't leave any evidence to help us out!"

Captain Riley glanced about and noted Tom.

"You can go back on your beat, patrolman," he said. "We won't need you further."

The investigation was conducted in the living-room of Vanderdecken's apartment on the second floor of the old house. Tom Kearney passed down the stairs slowly, thinking sadly of his good Dutch friend.

"Riley's all for giving it up already," he thought. "Like as not they'll never find who killed him, or why. Ah, why can't I be of some use here? If I only had a smart brain like Vanderdecken's cat!"

Exit from the house was through the shop, and Tom now stood in the cluttered room. He pushed back his stiff cap and scratched his red hair in perplexity, reconstructing his minute's talk with Vanderdecken—the last talk they would ever have.

Something stirred in the dusk, and a light body leaped to the floor, and the sound startled Tom and held him spellbound.

He straightened his cap with a jerk and his hand sought his pistol. His heart was hammering with excitement.

But it was only the cat, Diablo, Vanderdecken's big, black cat, crawling with its belly low to the floor.

Its tail was still enormous. It raised its big yellow eyes toward the stair at the rear and its mouth opened to hiss.

Tom knelt down, extending his fingers toward it.

"Puss, puss!" he coaxed. "Here, Diablo!"

"It's the master's cat—Mr. Vanderdecken's," said a voice at his shoulder. Tom crooked his neck to gaze into the face of Vanderdecken's old servant woman.

"I don't know what the devil has got into that cat!" Tom cried, irritable at the start she had given him. "The way he's been acting——"

"It's death in the house," the woman said solemnly. "The cat knows his master is dead."

"Ay!" Tom exclaimed. "Now I wouldn't wonder. I mind my grandfather had such a cat and when he died it acted wild. They shut it from the house."

"That cat knows!" the woman repeated. "And it was here when he was struck down. If that cat could tell what it knows!"

She shook her head ominously and went on about whatever errand had brought her downstairs.

Tom regarded the crouching cat curiously. "Are you so smart, I wonder? Do you know so much, like Vanderdecken said? Sure, you act like you know! You've been acting that way—you were acting like that——"

The words died on his lips. A sharp prickling went over his body. His skin crawled.

He glanced about the shop and saw it as he had seen it such a short time ago, with Vanderdecken sitting at his desk there in the rear and the cat lashing its big tail and hissing at him, its great eyes wild.

"You were acting like that when he sat there!" Tom whispered.

"Or was it——" He threw back his shoulders suddenly. "It was," he cried softly. "The cat stood in the presence of death! Vanderdecken was dead! Dead, and he talked to me while dead! He talked? Ah, no! He never talked. But somebody talked—talked and moved the dead man's head and body whilst he knelt there in the shadow back of that chair. Talked for Vanderdecken, because I'd come in and surprised him at his butcher's work! Yes, talked for Vanderdecken, and what was it he told me? What was it?"

The investigators above stairs regarded Tom with sharp, curious glances when he came hurrying back.

Tom drew Captain Riley aside and whispered to him.

"Him!" Riley cried. "You're crazy, man! You know who he is? How he stands? He can break a dozen of us, if he talks to the Commissioner! If you're wrong, God help you, because you're going to take the blame, not me!"

"I'll do it myself!" Tom cried.

He wheeled about.

"Karl Lent, you're under arrest. The charge is the murder of your uncle, Cornelius Vanderdecken."

Karl Lent shrugged coolly. "Do you indorse this madman?" he demanded of the detective captain.

"Answer his questions," Riley replied grimly. "I'll make up my mind."

"Then first," said Tom, "I'll trouble you for whatever is in your pockets. I'll help you look myself."

From Lent's coat pocket he drew a crumpled handkerchief. It was discolored with stains of blood. Tom tossed it to Riley.

"A nose-bleed," Lent sneered. "I have them frequently."

"Nose-bleed!" cried Tom. "I'll tell you what colored that! There was blood spilled on that desk and chair when you struck the old man with that knife. That's what you wiped it off with when you dragged his body back to the stair. The trace is there on the desk still! A chemist will prove whose blood that is.

"And it was you who knelt behind him, moved his dead body and talked when I put the cat in. You! I know now, for *why else should Vanderdecken want to tell me his nephew had gone home long ago?* Who wanted to say that but the man that had just murdered him and wanted to make his alibi air-tight? You were too smart for me with your ghastly acting, I'll admit that, but you never fooled the old man's cat. He knew his master was dead!"

When the news became public next day that Karl Lent's Wall Street house had gone into bankruptcy Lent confessed.

His uncle's property was his last hope of bolstering up his finances. Then Lent, who knew that the old man's will left him everything, struck him down. The rest was as Tom Kearney had guessed.

Cornelius Vanderdecken's fortune went to distant heirs, but the black cat fell to Tom Kearney, who carried it home and cherishes it to this day.

FEEL COLORS IN THE DARK

WE have not five senses, but twenty-five, including six senses of touch alone. Moreover, it is possible to develop the senses to a point where we can feel colors in the dark.

Dr. James J. Walsh, psychologist, makes these statements in the *Popular Science Monthly*.

"Have you ever taken your watch from your pocket, glanced at it, and then, a few seconds later found yourself unable to tell another person the time?" he asks. "Do you know the color of the eyes of the person who sits beside you in your office or stands next to you in your shop? Can you tell with what words the Government marks the value of a twenty-five-cent piece, or on which side of the coin they appear?"

These, he says, are the tests of the use you make of your senses, which he calls the "gateways of knowledge."

"Ninety-nine men in a hundred," writes Doctor Walsh, "feeling a piece of cloth and receiving just as many touch impressions from its temperature, texture, roughness, or smoothness as a textile expert, would pay no attention to these impressions.

"Those 99 men would remain in the crowded ranks of poorly paid routine workers, while the hundredth man became a highly paid specialist.

"I might multiply examples of the sort without number—ordinary persons who excel their fellows by no natural equipment of talent, but who have acquired a high degree of useful skill simply through practice and the use of their senses. Touch, eyesight, and hearing probably are the senses most generally employed in the more familiar forms of human endeavor. These can be trained only by concentration."

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

Send us a specimen of your writing with the coupon printed on page 63 and Miss Rice will analyze the handwriting free of charge. The answer will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of replies can be printed in each issue, owing to lack of space. If you desire an earlier reply in the form of a personal letter from Miss Rice, send us the sample of your writing and the coupon, and enclose 10 cents and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to cover the cost of handling, stationery, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you an answer. No readings will be given unless accompanied by a coupon for each individual.

—THE EDITOR.

LADDIE.—You are no more insane than I am, my dear boy. Get all these dreadful ideas out of your head. Your nature is a very sensitive and impressionable one and so you have got the idea that your mind is really "all wrong," as you put it. What you need is the sort of a life that a boy of eighteen ought to have, with normal interests. Go to a gymnasium, for one thing, and get interested in your physical development. A boy of your age ought not to be reading "half the night," no matter whether you read good books or not. Your handwriting shows me that you are a person of great intelligence; more than the ordinary. That is partly what is the matter with you. Your mind is outstripping your body. Stop paying attention to your mind for a while and develop the body and then the two will be moving in unison and at the same rate and you will find that all these fears and terrors have departed. Be good, now, and take big sister's advice!

JOSEPHINE C.—That use of the well-defined circle for the usual "i" dot always shows a very emotional and temperamental nature, so that I know at the first glance that what you most need to cultivate is self-control. You want to know which of these two boys you are best suited to? Why, dear little girl, you ought not to be thinking about that sort of thing at all yet. Your character is not yet mature. Neither one of these chaps would really make you happy after you have become the fine and intelligent woman that you are going to be.. One (the envelope) is ambitious but not affectionate. The other is good-natured and very affectionate but has no real ambition, and I am afraid that he will never be more than he is now. You would be unhappy with the first one because he will turn into a cold and unfeeling person, and you would never be satisfied with the other, since you are going to have a good deal more of pride and ambition than you now have. See?

MRS. MARLIN.—Yes, indeed, handwriting does do a great deal to explain the difficulties which arise between married folks. In fact, I know of nothing which will do as much, for by it the real point of the difficulty can be got at. In your case the trouble is that your husband is really jealous, although I am sure that he would never in the world own this. His dislike for you to go out is not stinginess. Try being a little more affectionate and demonstrative to him and try to arrange that he ask *him* to take you to places where you want to go. Yes, I know it's foolish, but you're married to him, aren't you? And you want to keep him, else you wouldn't be so worried about all this. Very well, then, you try what I am advising and you will see that it will work out all right and that you will be able to handle the matter as soon as you know what I have told you here.

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You will be more than pleased with the contents of our next issue, as it is going to contain a very large number of the most interesting stories and articles ever written. The best authors of detective and mystery fiction wrote them. Our first offering will be a feature detective story with a tremendous punch, entitled

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THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
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150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
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152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

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156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
162 "The Intriguers," by Grover Kidwell.
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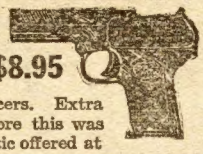

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A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

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